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THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

THE LOVE OF AN
UNCROWNED QUEEN
SOPHIE DOROTHEA, *CONSORT*
OF GEORGE I., and her Correspondence
with PHILIP CHRISTOPHER COUNT KÖNIGS-
MARCK (*Now first published from the originals*)

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NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

1906

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1906

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This edition published July, 1906

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THE TROW PRESS, N. Y.

PREFACE

IT has been too generally assumed that the romance of the English Crown passed away with the Stuarts.

Writers of fact and fiction—historians, novelists, poets, and playwrights—have concentrated their energies on the period of English history covered by the Stuart dynasty, and the Georgian era has been comparatively neglected. The reason is not far to seek. Our Hanoverian kings had none of the picturesqueness of their unfortunate predecessors; they lacked alike their splendid failings and their redeeming graces; and until the accession of George III. they were wholly foreign to the people of England. Despite this, the kings and queens of the House of Hanover have an interest that is all their own. Especially is this true of Sophie Dorothea, the ill-fated consort of George I. The story of her romantic life has been shrouded in mystery, and she has been even more misrepresented than the “Queen of Tears,” Mary Stuart. Her imprisonment in the lonely castle of Ahlden was longer and more rigorous than Mary’s captivity in England, and the assassination of Königsmarck was as dramatic as the murder of Rizzio.

It is strange that so little should be known of the consort of the first of our Hanoverian kings. It is not the fault

of the book-makers, who for nearly two centuries have been continually compiling pamphlets and so-called memoirs, some in English, but more in German. Only two are worthy of mention, the *Octavia* and *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*.¹ The *Octavia* was written during Sophie Dorothea's lifetime by her champion and cousin, Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. It was a fairly true version of the Princess's story; but the bias of the writer and the form of the work, which partook of the nature of a *roman à clef* presented in dramatic dialogues, told against accuracy. Many of the later works have been merely echoes of the *Octavia*. *Die Herzogin von Ahlden* was written more than a hundred years later by Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, and published anonymously in Leipsig in 1852. This little book, the fruit of much labour and research, was compiled from all the documents and authorities then available. It gathered together a mass of evidence and summed up all there was to be said. Yet "lives" of the Princess continued to appear from time to time, none containing any new facts, and most of them merely a *réchauffage* of previous fables.

Without fresh facts or documents there would be no excuse for entering upon a ground already much covered. But since the publication of *Die Herzogin von Ahlden* many interesting papers have come to light. When Prussia annexed the Kingdom of Hanover after

¹ Both were in German, and are now out of print. I have given a list of some others in the Appendix.

the Revolution of 1866, and expelled the reigning dynasty, a great many State and domestic papers hitherto carefully locked up in the Guelph family archives were thrown open. In Germany historians have not been slow to avail themselves of the facilities thus afforded, as the labours of Dr. Adolph Köcher, A. F. H. Schaumann, and others, abundantly testify. But in England, notwithstanding that Hanover is the cradle of our kings, and these unpublished documents have direct and personal bearing on the history of our Royal House, nothing, or practically nothing, has been done to turn them to account. They have been available for the last thirty years, yet so far no one has written an English monograph of that remarkable woman, the Electress Sophia—at least, not one worthy of the name.

In addition, therefore, to the interest of the subject, the fact that these Hanoverian papers are practically unknown to the English public forms a sufficient reason for writing this book. But apart from the papers in the Hanoverian Archives, I claim to have found other important documents which shed a new light on the mystery of Sophie Dorothea's life. The despatches of Sir William Dutton Colt, of Cresset, Poley, and many of those of Stepney, freely quoted in this book, are now published for the first time. But more important still, and transcending all in interest, is the correspondence of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck. This correspondence is herein translated from the French of the original documents in the possession of the University of Lund

in Sweden, and I have further edited and arranged it. It has not before been published in English, and (except for a few unimportant extracts in a Swedish book, long since out of print) has never been published in any language. My discovery of these letters three years ago suggested the idea of writing this book. To follow up the clue has involved considerable research, not only at the State Paper Office in London, but at Hanover, Brunswick, Dresden, and Lund. With a view to doing the work thoroughly, I have followed as closely as possible the footsteps of the Princess during her life. I have visited Celle, where she was born; Hanover, where she lived during her unhappy married life; and Ahlden, where, for more than thirty years, she was consigned to a living tomb. I also went to Lund in Sweden, where the letters are preserved in the library of the University, and, with the kind permission and assistance of the University authorities, carefully examined the manuscripts. Every effort has been made to render this biography as complete as possible: it must ever remain incomplete, alas! for some of the most valuable papers were destroyed by George I., George II., and their descendants, and the mystery around Sophie Dorothea can never be quite cleared away.

The late Miss Agnes Strickland, it is well known, brought her *Lives of the Queens of England* to an end with Queen Anne. In her preface to the final volume, written in 1848, she advances two reasons for not continuing them further. First, the lack of authentic docu-

ments and letters; and secondly, because "personages so near our own times are not proper subjects for historical investigation." The first objection has since been obviated by the opening of the Hanoverian Archives and the discovery of other documents; to the second it may be urged that as Miss Strickland wrote fifty years ago, her objection has lost force by the lapse of time. A princess who died nearly two centuries ago can hardly be discribed as "near our own times." For the rest, as the wife of one of our kings Sophie Dorothea belongs to history. There is no more impropriety in writing her life than in writing one of, say, Anne Boleyn, who also was a queen consort accused of offences which could never be proved against her, and who suffered out of all proportion to her errors. Indeed, there is even less; for posterity has learned all it is ever likely to know about Anne Boleyn, but the secrecy and misrepresentation with which Sophie Dorothea's memory is surrounded needs the light of impartial historical investigation. In the biographies of the unfortunate Princess hitherto given to the world, she appears either as an injured saint or a most incorrigible sinner. In point of fact she was neither, but merely a loving woman, very human, and therefore not free from faults, but far more sinned against than sinning.

A word in conclusion as to the title of this book. In writing Sophie Dorothea's life one must write of her love, since without her love her life was nothing. Of course, in the strictly legal sense, though consort of

George I., she was never Queen of England any more than she was Electress of Hanover, though *de jure* she was both. But to quote Doran, Sophie Dorothea, "from the time her husband ascended the throne, was in some sort of loving sorrow called by the few left to love her, the Queen." A queen though never acknowledged, a queen though always a prisoner, a queen though never crowned—truly a queen of tears.

*

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THE LOVE

OF

AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

CHAPTER I

THE ROMANCE OF THE PRINCESS'S PARENTAGE

Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

SHELLEY.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA of Celle, the uncrowned Queen of the first of our Hanoverian kings came of the ancient and illustrious family of Brunswick, which was descended from Henry the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony, who, it is interesting to note, married Matilda, eldest daughter of King Henry II. of England. It is not necessary to dwell upon the glories of the House of Brunswick, but the immediate ancestry of Sophie Dorothea may be of interest.

After the Treaty of Westphalia, which was somewhat disastrous to the Brunswick princes taking part in the Thirty Years War, this family was divided into two branches, Augustus Duke of Brunswick representing

one, and Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg representing the other.

On the death of Augustus, his territories were divided amongst his three sons, with only one of whom we are concerned, Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. It is necessary to mention him, as he played a not unimportant part in the life of his cousin, Sophie Dorothea of Celle. From this branch of the family the Dukes of Brunswick are descended, and it gave another uncrowned queen to England in the person of the unfortunate Caroline, consort of George IV.

Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg died in 1649, leaving the four sons of his brother, Duke George, his heirs. Of these, the eldest son, Christian Louis, was given the Sovereign Principality of Celle, then the most important; the second son, George William, subsequently the father of Sophie Dorothea, was given the Sovereign Principality of Hanover. The two younger sons, John Frederick and Ernest Augustus, had no territory at first.

When the four ducal brothers, all young men, entered upon their inheritance, changes took place in the sedate and simple Courts of Hanover and Celle. Hitherto they had been typical of the petty German Courts in the Middle Ages, untouched as yet by foreign influences. According to Vehse, at the Schloss of Celle meals were served daily in the great hall, at nine in the morning and at four in the afternoon. The retainers were summoned to meals by a trumpeter on the tower, and if they did not appear punctually they had to go without. As they ate, a page went round "bidding every one be quiet and orderly, forbidding all swearing, and rudeness, or throwing about of bread, bones, or roast, or pocketing of the same." The butler was warned not to permit noble or simple to enter the cellar; the squires were allowed beer and

"sleep-drinks," but wine was only served at the Prince's high table. All accounts were carefully kept, and bills paid weekly. The Court was one big family, and the Prince was the father of his people. But this well-ordered household was in the days of the old Duke Christian, a predecessor of the four roystering blades who now divided the possessions of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

The eldest, the young Duke Christian, settled down to a fairly quiet life at Celle; "his only fault," we hear, "was drinking," a very venal offence in those days. But the second brother, Duke George William, found life at Hanover unbearably tedious. He had little liking for the stiff and monotonous routine of his German Court; the simple lives of his subjects bored him, and their rude manners and coarse habit of living disgusted him. Though all his life strongly anti-French in his politics, he belonged to the new school of German princes, and affected the society and fashions of the French, so much so that on one occasion a French envoy said to him at his own table: "But, Monseigneur, this is charming; there is no foreigner here but you." Though a young man, George William had already travelled in Italy, and acquired a certain polish of manners and superficial refinement not usually to be found among German princes of his time. The first use he made of his freedom was to escape from the tedium of his uninteresting little Principality, and, in company with his youngest brother, Ernest Augustus, who was then his boon companion, and largely dependent upon his bounty, he made another tour in Italy, visiting Milan and Venice. At Venice, then at its zenith, the ducal brothers plunged into the delights and dissipations which the gay city offered. George William formed an intimacy with a Venetian lady, one Signora Buccolini, by whom he had a son. For many years he was devoted

to her, and maintained her in considerable affluence; for, with all his faults, he was of a generous disposition. But the lady was of so passionate, jealous, and exacting a temperament that at last she tired the patience of her protector. After many quarrels he made an agreement by which he settled a sum of money upon the mother, and took the charge of the boy's education upon himself. This was the final separation. He took back the young Lucas Buccolini with him to Hanover, clipped his Italian name into Bucco, or Buccow, and found him a place in his household.¹

George William's subjects did not appreciate these frequent absences of their liege lord, nor did they approve of the Italian singers and dancers and the Venetian son whom he brought back with him to his prim little Court. They became exceedingly restive, and pointed out that there was need of a duchess and an heir. Duke Christian of Celle was unwed, and Duke George William of Hanover, who was next in succession, was a bachelor too. Their subjects, both of Celle and Hanover, considered this a neglect of duty on the part of their princes, and, remonstrances having no avail, at last the members of the State in Hanover threatened to cut short George William's allowance if he did not marry forthwith. Moreover, knowing his predilections, they intimated plainly that they wished no foreign bride, and suggested that the Princess Sophia, the orphan daughter of the luckless Frederick Prince Palatine, ex-King of Bohemia (by the beautiful Elizabeth, daughter of James I. of England), would be a suitable duchess.

¹ On attaining to man's estate, this youth filled the office of Master of the Horse at the Court of Celle; later he became a colonel of the dragoons. He seems to have been of a jealous disposition, and was always grumbling because his putative father did not enough for him.

The Princess Sophia was well past her first youth, and was understood to be anxious to settle herself in life. She was then living with her brother, the Elector Palatine of the Rhenish Provinces, at Heidelberg, as State governess to his children. The household was not a happy one, for the Elector and his wife were leading a cat-and-dog life, and Sophia's lot, as a poor relation, was hardly enviable. She was a healthy little body, decidedly good-looking, though she had not inherited the beauty of her mother "The Queen of Hearts." "My hair," she writes, "was light brown and in natural curls; my general appearance gay and lightsome; my figure good, but not very tall; my deportment that of a princess. I take no pleasure in remembering all the rest, of which my mirror shows me nothing left." She had sharp wits and a sharp tongue, and the life she had led, knocking about Europe in the poverty-stricken Court of the Queen of Bohemia, had developed both to an unusual degree. Yet notwithstanding the financial troubles of her youth, "my spirits," she continues, "were so high in those days that everything amused me; the misfortunes of my house were unable to depress them, although at times we had to make repasts richer than Cleopatra's, and nothing was eaten at Court but pearls and diamonds." This was one of Sophia's figures of speech, for it is to be feared that the pearls and diamonds had long since gone to the Jews. Despite her poverty, or perhaps in consequence of it, Sophia was inordinately proud of her birth, especially her English ancestry, on which she was never tired of expatiating. At one time she had been put forward as a suitable wife for her first cousin, the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II. of England, and with that view had been carefully trained in the English language and English ways. The match fell through,

and so, in the after years, did many others, some good, some indifferent, which had been projected for her by her relations. As Sophia was very ambitious, the failure of her matrimonial chances was a great disappointment to her. She was now twenty-nine, and her good looks were somewhat impaired by an attack of small-pox; she was therefore quite ready to meet the husband whom the Hanoverians had proposed for her, half way.

George William, seeing that his subjects' minds were made up, shrugged his shoulders and submitted to the inevitable. If it had to be, Sophia would do as well as any other. He therefore started for Heidelberg, on the way to his beloved Venice, accompanied again by his brother, Ernest Augustus. Without ado he proposed for Sophia's hand, and she "did not at all hesitate to say *Yes*," as she admits in her autobiography. He made no pretence to any affection, and she required none. A marriage contract was drawn up and duly signed, with the single proviso that the betrothal should not be made public for a little time.

The business having been settled, George William hurried on to Venice, and revelled in his brief spell of freedom. But his approaching marriage hung over him like a pall; he thought over the matter, and one morning he came to the conclusion that after all he could not take upon himself the restraints of matrimony with a woman for whom he had not a particle of affection. The situation was difficult, for if he did not wed her his subjects were determined to reduce his income, and to the pleasure-loving Duke this was an equally unpleasant alternative. In this dilemma he bethought himself of Ernest Augustus, his youngest brother, and suggested to him that he should act as his substitute. All that his subjects wanted was an heir, and with this Ernest Augustus would

be able to furnish them, through Sophia, as well as he. Ernest Augustus was nothing loth to take his brother's place—for a consideration. He was favourably disposed towards the Princess, with whom he had flirted in his youth; they had met at the Hague and had played the guitar together, but as he was a younger son, Sophia had nipped the flirtation in the bud. A deed was drawn up between the two brothers, in which George William undertook to surrender certain of his revenues, and bound himself not to marry, so as to leave his inheritance and all his rights to the brother who would act as substitute for him in the matter of his intended bride and ducal obligations. Just as the contract was signed the other impecunious brother, John Frederick, came into the room, and, on learning its contents, fell into a rage because the chance had not been offered to him first; he tried to tear away the document from Ernest Augustus, George William looking on with amusement. This happy-go-lucky way of choosing a bride was quite in keeping with the traditions of the House of Brunswick; an ancestor of these princes cast dice with his seven brothers for a wife on somewhat similar conditions, and won the prize—a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt.

The next thing was to acquaint the Princess Sophia with the arrangement; that lady, having satisfied herself that the terms of the agreement were equally advantageous to her and her heirs, raised no objection to being handed over like a bale of goods, and though her pride was hurt, she skilfully concealed her resentment. Her brother, the Elector Palatine, glad to get rid of her and her sharp tongue, told her that he thought she was better for the change of brothers, a remark with which she agreed, adding that, "A good establishment is all I care for, and if

this is secured to the younger brother, the change is a matter of indifference."

These negotiations from first to last took two years; in September, 1658, the marriage was celebrated with some pomp at Heidelberg, and in November the Duchess Sophia took up her abode at Hanover, where she was the first lady in the land, and treated with every honour. She was always a great stickler for etiquette, and insisted on every tittle of the respect due to her rank and illustrious ancestry. Curiously enough, if we may believe her memoirs, no sooner was she married to Ernest Augustus than George William became attracted to her, thereby arousing the jealousy of her husband, until she begged the elder brother "for the love of God," to leave her in peace.

In 1660 her eldest son, George Louis (afterwards George I. of England), was born at Osnabrück, and the arrival of the much-wished-for heir increased her importance. The following year Ernest Augustus succeeded to the bishopric of Osnabrück,¹ and Sophia's prospects were the more improved.

Meantime George William had overcome his belated *penchant* for Sophia, if indeed it ever existed save in her imagination, and was gratifying his pleasure-loving soul by making a tour of many cities. Among others, he went to Breda, at the end of the seventeenth century an

¹ Osnabrück was a see founded by Charlemagne. Luther had many followers among the citizens, and at the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, which was concluded at Osnabrück, it was arranged that the Prince Bishop should be alternately a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic, the selection of the bishop being left with the chapter, restricted, however, to the family of Brunswick-Lüneburg. This arrangement resulted in some very odd bishops. The last member of the English Royal Family to hold the title was the Duke of York, son of George III., the Queen's uncle.

exceedingly gay place, albeit money was somewhat lacking there. It was the chosen home of political refugees, exiled princes, and deposed monarchs, who kept up their spirits despite their fallen fortunes, and maintained phantom Courts on nothing a year. Here Charles II. dwelt for some time in his exile with many celebrated cavaliers; here, too, his aunt, the Queen of Bohemia, had held her shadowy Court; here, too was concluded the peace between England and Holland. All these things contributed to the importance and gaiety of Breda; there were feasts, masquerades, and revelries, and plays with after-suppers and dances. Among the gayest of the gay was the Princess de Tarente, an aunt of the Duchess Sophia, a German princess who had married a French prince. One of her most cherished *protégées* was Eléonore d'Olbreuse, only child of the Marquis d'Olbreuse, a nobleman of ancient family, of Poitou. He was one of the many French Huguenots who, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were persecuted by the Government of Louis XIV. As he would not recant, his estates were confiscated, he was sent into exile, and found an asylum in Holland.

Before the persecution of the Huguenot nobles Eléonore d'Olbreuse had figured at the brilliant Court of Louis XIV., where she was greatly admired for her wit and beauty. She was endowed with an exquisite figure, dark brown hair, regular features, and a brilliant complexion. At this time she was in the first bloom of youth, and her loveliness was only equalled by her sprightliness and charm of manner.¹ George William met her at a ball at the Princess de Tarente's, and being

¹ There is a portrait of her, dressed in a blue robe, in the Guelph Museum at Hanover, as she was in middle life—a beautiful woman, with masses of dark brown hair and a superb figure.

of an amorous, though not of a marrying disposition, he fell in love at first sight. He became a constant visitor at the Princess de Tarente's, and a closer acquaintance with the accomplishments and graces of the bewitching Eléonore only served to rivet his chains. He affected a great zeal to perfect his French, and the fair Eléonore willingly consented to give the good-looking Duke lessons, thereby offering fine opportunities for a flirtation. What progress George William made with the French language is not recorded, but in the art of love there is no doubt he made rapid advances, for after a few lessons in the conjugation of the verb *aimer*, he avowed his passion in most extravagant terms, and swore that he could not live without her. He found that the citadel did not yield to the first attack. Eléonore d'Olbreuse was of a very different calibre to Signora Buccolini; she had only two available assets, her beauty and her virtue, and she was well aware of the value of both. She was not versed in the *menue galanterie* of the Court of the Grand Monarque for nothing. George William was fervent in his protestations, prodigal in his promises of devotion, and what was more to the purpose, most liberal in his proposals as to settlements; but Eléonore held firm. Her birth was noble, though not royal, and, despite her poverty, she held that a French marquis of ancient descent was not so very inferior to a petty German prince. George William could not be expected to take this view, for, though indifferent to the trappings of rank, he, like all German princes, was inclined to over-estimate his own importance. But he could not give her up; he who had been accustomed to command in love was now its humblest suppliant; he who was indolent, easy-going in temperament, now developed an ardour and determination altogether foreign to him; he who was slow of speech now

became most eloquent in the language of love. Eléonore had worked a transformation. So infatuated was he that he would willingly have married her then and there but for the document he had signed when the marriage was arranged between Ernest Augustus and Sophia. Eléonore knew nothing of this arrangement, but she positively refused to entertain any proposals short of marriage.

In this dilemma George William thought of a morganatic marriage,¹ and offered handsome settlements. The Princess de Tarente advised her friend to yield. The Marquis d'Olbreuse put no pressure on his daughter; but she was well aware of the straits to which poverty had reduced him, and could see that in his heart he favoured the Duke's suit. If she consented she would secure for her father a comfortable provision for his declining years. Eléonore, too, was really in love with George William; but still she held back.

In order to bring matters to a climax, the Princess de Tarente gave a brilliant entertainment in honour of the birthday of her friend and *protégée*, when she presented her with a jewelled medallion of her lover. The result seemed inevitable, for she who hesitates is lost; when suddenly couriers came hot-foot from Celle with the news that George William's elder brother, Christian, was dead, and his younger brother, John Frederick, who owed him

¹ A marriage *ad morganaticum*, sanctioned by the Church, but so far disallowed by law that the children of such wedlock were *infantes nullius*, and could succeed to no inheritance. This sorry expedient had been frequently resorted to by George William's ancestors, and afterwards by his descendants—princes of the House of Hanover. One of the last of these marriages was that of the Duke of Sussex with Lady Augusta Murray. It seems absurd that this should have been morganatic, considering that Lady Augusta was descended from our oldest and proudest nobility and had Stuart blood in her veins.

a grudge for having been cheated out of Sophia, had seized on the Castle of Celle and established himself in the Duchy. George William had to post in haste to Celle to uphold his rights and turn out the usurper, but before leaving Breda he placed a paper in the hands of his beloved Eléonore, in which she found that he had settled on her, in the event of his death, the whole of his private fortune with the exception of a few legacies.

It took some time for George William to arrange things satisfactorily at Celle; but at last he persuaded John Frederick to relinquish the Duchy, and gave him compensation, for his frequent absences had weakened his rights. George William then became Duke of Celle, and John Frederick succeeded to Hanover, Ernest Augustus remaining Bishop of Osnabrück.

When affairs of State were settled satisfactorily George William's thoughts once more turned to love. But there were many difficulties. He could not leave his dominions so soon, he could not return to Breda to see the object of his affections; while she, on her part, refused all entreaties to come to him. In this dilemma he confided in his sister-in-law, the Duchess Sophia, of whose judgment he had great admiration. Sophia sympathised, softened, doubtless, by one of those little presents whereby George William was in the habit of buying the complaisance of the Court at Osnabrück, and promised to see the affair through, provided that nothing were done to impair her rights. It could hardly have been a congenial task to Sophia, and her jealousy showed itself early by her scoffing at Eléonore's airs of virtue, which she declared were only assumed to increase her value. But she was not one to allow sentiment to stand in the way of substantial benefit. Sophia's prospects had again distinctly improved by the death of Duke Christian. John

Frederick was still unwed, and likely to remain so;¹ and if she could tie George William down to an amour without legitimate heirs, in the fulness of time she or her children might reign not only at Osnabrück, but also at Hanover and Celle. So the illustrious Duchess Sophia, the descendant of kings, the great lady of Osnabrück, wrote a dissembling letter to poor exiled Eléonore, asking her to come, assuring her of respect, and offering her as a pretext the post of lady-in-waiting at her Court. Eléonore still hesitated. She was very proud and very poor; but she was very much in love, and wearied with importunities. The Duchess wrote again, even more urgently. These attentions from one who was known everywhere as a great Princess flattered Eléonore's pride, and the prospect of joining her lover gratified her love. She consented and came.

Eléonore was received with every mark of respect. Sophia, accompanied by George William, met her at the foot of the grand staircase of the castle. She was led up to the Duchess's own chamber, where coffee and salt biscuits, an unusual honour, were offered to her, and she was then conducted to her apartments. No one could be more affable than the Duchess; everything seemed straightforward, and it is no wonder that Eléonore, a stranger in a strange land, was outwitted. She soon found that she could not draw back without compromising her reputation, so she yielded to advice, not altogether reluctantly, and accepted at last the left-handed marriage offered her. A contract was drawn up, worded almost as if it were a regular marriage; but carefully guarding the rights of Sophia, her husband, and her children; and the signatures of Ernest Augustus and Sophia were written under those of George William of Celle and

¹ He married later, 1668, but his wife brought him no children.

Eléonore d'Olbreuse. After the ceremony, which took place in September, 1665, Eléonore was granted the title of Madame von Harburg, so called from an estate of the Duke's, and her nominal place of lady-in-waiting was filled by her sister Angelica, whom she later married to the Comte de Reuss.

In her memoirs Sophia declares that at first she was agreeably surprised to find Eléonore a very amiable person, of modest and even retiring manners, and she no doubt thought she would be easily kept in her place—not a high one. She soon found herself mistaken. For some months after the morganatic marriage Eléonore continued to live in the household of the Duchess Sophia, and was not treated with any great honour, and certainly not admitted to an equality of rank. For instance, at meal-times she did not take her place at the ducal table, and had to sit on a low chair, without anything to eat, at a respectful distance from the Duchess Sophia and Duke George William and Ernest Augustus, who ate their food while Madame von Harburg looked on. But she was allowed to remain seated when any princes were present, and this was considered a great concession. Her pride was much hurt at this etiquette, nor did the heavy living and coarse manners of the German Court appeal to her finer tastes. In her interesting letters to her uncle she complains that “her heart was sadly turned” by the enormous dishes brought before the princely eaters, their *menu* consisting chiefly of greasy sausages thrown in lumps on red cabbage, and a farinaceous mass of ginger and onions. This was washed down by cloudy, heavy ale, of which they drank freely. “Now,” the Duchess Sophia would exclaim after she had eaten her fill, mopping her face with a napkin, “you may go, my dear, and help your ‘angelic’ sister with her saucepans.” This was

a jeer at the habit of Eléonore and Angelica preparing for themselves a little meal after the French *cuisine* in their dressing-rooms.

Madame von Harburg was not stinted in her establishment; she was allowed a chariot drawn by six horses, but she was never seen abroad with the Duchess Sophia or the Bishop of Osnabrück. She was not, however, a lady content with the second place, and as her influence with her husband was great, and grew greater as his love increased, she had little difficulty in persuading him to take her away with him to the Schloss at Celle, where she was safe from the patronage of the Duchess Sophia and could develop on her own lines. George William was glad to take up his abode at the capital of his Duchy, and, thanks to hismorganatic wife, he abandoned his roving habits and settled down as a model duke, making plans for the improvement of his castle and the better government of his people.

After they had been a few months at Celle, Eléonore set the seal on her influence with her husband by presenting him with a daughter—Sophie Dorothea.

CHAPTER II

THE PROGRESS OF ELÉONORE

(1666—1676)

Oh, were I seated high as my ambition,
I'd place this naked foot on necks of monarchs!

WALPOLE.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA was born in the Castle of Celle on September 15, 1666. On the anniversary of her birth two hundred and thirty-two years later it chanced that the writer visited Celle. It must have been on just such a September morning that Sophie Dorothea was born, with the sun blazing down on the yellow-washed walls and shining into the chamber where the birth-bed was, with the limes and silver beeches in the garden flecked with the gold of autumn, and the blue-green reeds waving on the edge of the sluggish moat. The fine old Schloss had changed little with the flight of centuries. The drawbridge and portcullis had gone; but the moat, filled with water from the Aller, still flowed dully about the walls, separated from them only by a strip of garden. The great courtyard, with its high yellow walls, timeworn sundial, and pyramid of cannon-balls in one corner (doubtless the spoil of one of George William's many campaigns), even the flock of white and purple pigeons fluttering down on the rough stones, all seemed to breathe the spirit of the seventeenth century. And looking up at the north wing, where Sophie Dorothea was born, it required little effort of the imagination to

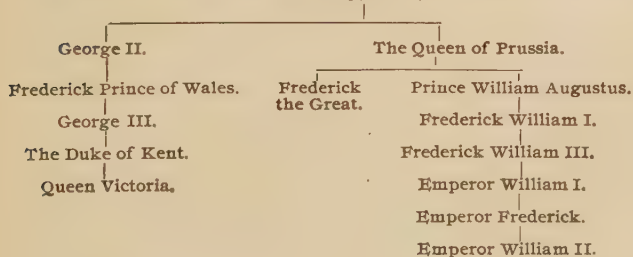
people again the deserted courtyard with lackeys and squires, to conjure up the clatter of hoofs and the clank of spurs, the bustle of congratulation, the arrival and departure of messengers and doctors, all of which signified to the little town of Celle that a daughter was born to the head of the great house of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and, though they knew it not, an ancestress to two of the mightiest monarchs of the modern world—the Queen of England and the German Emperor.¹

The little town of Celle, at least that part of it which clusters around the base of the castle's mighty walls, has also changed little since the days of Sophie Dorothea. The old brick church where the babe of that bright morning now sleeps with her fathers remains the same. The triangular market-place and the quaint little streets which branch off from it, many of them narrow and irregular, bear the marks of the flight of centuries. The old part of the town still stands with houses dated 1609 to 1700, having outer beams carved with curious and uncouth mottoes. Celle, though a fairly prosperous town, has not

¹ Short genealogical table showing descent of Queen Victoria and the Emperor William II. from SOPHIE DOROTHEA of Celle.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA.

Married her first cousin, George Louis (afterwards George I.); they had two children—*viz*:



shot ahead like Hanover. But in those days Celle, with its magnificent Schloss, the seat of the elder brother's Duchy, was a place of considerable importance. It was a veritable Naboth's vineyard to Ernest Augustus and Sophia, his spouse, who, from their little Court at Osnabrück, looked towards it with longing eyes.

The news of the birth of a daughter was not welcome to them, but they consoled themselves with the thought that the child was the fruit of a morganatic union, and, after they had cracked a few coarse jokes, dismissed the subject from their minds. But they were soon reminded rather rudely. The infant was given the name of Sophie Dorothea, and the christening was celebrated with much ceremony and many festivities and rejoicings. Ernest Augustus angrily remarked that if the infant had been a princess instead of only the daughter of his brother's *madame*, he could not have made more fuss about it; and that was true, for, from the first moment Sophie Dorothea drew breath, though in strict law she was a person of no importance, expressly excluded from holding any rank at Celle, the same honours were paid to her as if she had been the heiress to the Duchy.

From this time onward the rift between the Duchess Sophia and Eléonore gradually widened into an open feud. As long as she had to think only of herself Eléonore had borne patiently Sophia's insults and humiliations; but now that a child was born, she determined to spare no effort to raise herself and her daughter to a recognized position. She played her part with consummate skill. She had to fight against not merely the uncompromising hostility of Ernest Augustus and the jealous hatred of his Duchess, but the forces of custom and precedence which bind the petty German Courts with

an iron band. She had to beat down the jealousy and prejudice against herself as an alien and a stranger, and win the support and recognition not only of her husband's subjects, but of the neighboring princes, and even of the Emperor himself. When we consider the forces against her, we are lost in admiration of the courage, patience, and sagacity of this woman, who year after year never swerved from the end she had in view, and at last found her efforts crowned with success.

Success did not come in a night. It took Eléonore ten years before she obtained the object of her desire—ten years of constant effort; for her arch-enemy and rival, the Duchess Sophia, was ever on the alert to check her moves and foil her plans. One great advantage Eléonore had at this time, she was sure of her husband's love; and as George William was as easy-going as his wife was energetic, and as contented as she was ambitious, she soon managed to gain a mastery over him—the mastery of a strong mind over a weak one. Her next duty was to cultivate the arts of popularity and win the good will of her husband's subjects, no easy matter, for the prejudice against "the Frenchwoman" and morganatic wife was strong in the little German Principality. But her tact and affability soon won her golden opinions in Celle. From the first she seemed to take the townsfolk into her confidence; she drove about the town with her infant daughter, radiant with bows and smiles, and soon the inhabitants began to regard the little one as their own child, and to be as jealous of her rights as they were of their own. This devotion of the honest townsfolk of Celle to Sophie Dorothea never wavered, but lasted all through her life.

Not content with sowing the seeds of her child's popularity in her infancy, Eléonore used other means to endear

herself to her husbands' subjects. At her instigation Duke George William proceeded to restore the old Schloss on a scale of considerable magnificence, taking care always to employ local workmen. The little theatre¹ in the castle, so long unused, was opened again for plays and musical performances, and to these entertainments gentle and simple were bidden, and seated according to their rank. Thus, after many years, a lady was once more *châtelaine* at the Schloss of Celle, and again there might be said to be a Court there.

George William warmly seconded all these efforts of his wife, and so great was his love for her and the little child that his one idea seemed to be how best to advance their interests. The rival Court of Osnabrück, queened over by the descendant of kings, regarded all these innovations and the "mock court" at Celle with open ridicule yet concealed uneasiness. Sophia was presenting her husband with a numerous family, and she was anxious

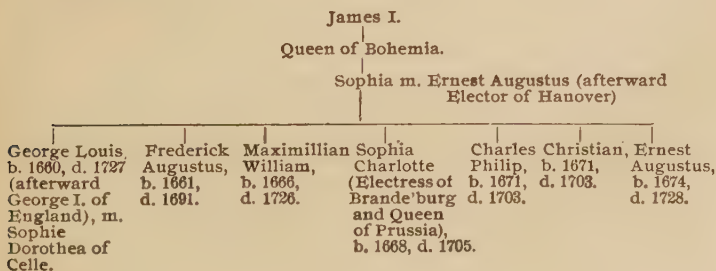
¹ The theatre is in the old part of the Palace at Celle, approached by vaulted stone corridors, with walls five feet thick, and has a large stage and a number of little boxes, the royal box of course occupying a position of prominence. The decorations are simple; most of the theatre is whitewashed. Like the rest of the Castle of Celle, it has changed little, though the castle has witnessed many changes. On the death of George William, the castle passed into the possession of George I., and through him to successive kings of England. On the accession of Queen Victoria, the Schloss became the property of the King of Hanover, Ernest Augustus (Duke of Cumberland), who altered it somewhat inside, not for the better, and it remained in the possession of the Royal Family of Hanover until the Revolution of 1866, when it was seized, together with other Hanoverian possessions, by Prussia, and merged into the province of Brunswick. For some time it was used as one of the summer palaces of the present Prince Regent of Brunswick; but he never goes there now, and the Schloss is almost dismantled of furniture, but well kept and in perfect order.

that nothing should be done to prejudice the rights of her offspring.¹

Ernest Augustus held the security of his brother's promise not to enter into a legal marriage, and believed in it implicitly; but he naturally asked himself to what end Eléonore was working? He heard much of George William's boundless generosity to his morganatic wife, and he liked not the diversion of his private property from what he thought its proper direction, to wit, himself.

Within the next few years Eléonore bore her husband three more daughters, but they all died in infancy, and Sophie Dorothea remained the spoiled darling of her father's affections. So devoted was he to the child that the mother's influence grew day by day; and when the little girl was five years old, George William, knowing that by his thoughtless contract with Ernest Augustus he had shut out his wife and daughter from all succession to his dominions, began to purchase land to bequeath as he pleased. To this end he bought five domains, and settled them upon Eléonore and Sophie Dorothea, so as to make provision for them in case of his death. But even this reasonable arrangement was not carried through without a bribe to satisfy Ernest Augustus, who would

¹ Table showing descent of Sophia from James I. of England, and her children:



only tolerate his brother's liberality to his wife and daughter on the understanding that he received a handsome commission for himself. This was the first marked step in the progress of Eléonore, and a little later she sounded the Emperor about the possibility of legitimising Sophie Dorothea. The Emperor returned a favourable, if somewhat guarded, reply; it was evident she could obtain her heart's desire if she could manage to pay the price. We find her, therefore, instigating George William to send troops to help the Emperor in sundry campaigns. This was done, and George William so distinguished himself that the Emperor received him in private audience, and most graciously inquired after his "Duchess," pretending not to know the true state of affairs.

The Emperor's condescension reached the ears of the Duchess Sophia, and the embers of her jealousy burst into a blaze. Eléonore's conduct was a model of wifely devotion; so, as the Duchess Sophia could not bring any charge against her after her marriage, she raked up some old slander, and accused her publicly of having simultaneously carried on two intrigues when she was at the Court of Louis XIV. She represented her as a designing adventuress, who, while doing her best to marry Colin, a page-in-waiting of Elizabeth Charlotte Duchess d'Orleans, tried to catch George William as the bigger match of the two. These charges were not very damaging or convincing, but malice went further. We find the Duchess Sophia writing to her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans: "Never would any respectable girl have entered the house of the Princess de Tarente, for, though she is my aunt—to my intense disgust—she is not a person with whom any one can live and remain clean. However," she added, "d'Olbreuse being a nobody, it does not mat-

ter much." George William treated the tale about the intrigue with the contempt it deserved, but the statement that his wife was a "nobody" seems to have rankled; so he and his lady thought of a very poor means of defence. They paid two thousand thalers to a French genealogist to make out an elaborate family tree, to prove that Eléonore d'Olbreuse was descended in an almost direct line from the kings of France. The Duchess Sophia received the pedigree with scorn and derision, and transmitted it to the Duchess d'Orleans, who, being somewhat of a wit, made out a caricature, in which she clearly showed that her head cook was a descendant of Philip the Bold. Naturally these tactics did not tend to smooth matters between Sophia and Eléonore, who were now not on speaking terms, nor were they successful in winning George William from the object of his affections. Man-like, the more his wife was attacked the more he defended her; and Eléonore, who had her share of vanity, was so upset and wounded by being thus flouted that she became quite ill, and had to take a cure at Pymont, then a fashionable watering-place, to restore her health. George William was worried, too, and by way of a consolation he purchased for Eléonore another and yet more valuable estate, including the fertile island of Wilhelmsburg, in the Elbe, near Hamburg. This he settled upon her for life, and made arrangements for it to become, after her death, the inheritance of Sophie Dorothea. Again Ernest Augustus protested, and again he was bought off, this time with a bribe of eighteen thousand thalers. But all the same, the victory remained with Eléonore. If she could not get the genealogy, at least she had substantial consolation. The possession of a property like the island of Wilhelmsburg naturally aroused comment, not only at Osnabrück, but the neigh-

boring Courts. It was regarded as open evidence of Eléonore's influence; she became a person of consequence outside the little circle of Celle, and all the German princes began to wonder what would happen next.

They were not left long in doubt. A few months later the mighty Emperor sent to the Court of Celle the letters patent which granted the legitimising of Sophie Dorothea, and gave the title of Countess of Wilhelmsburg to Eléonore. If the memoirs of the time are to be believed, this Imperial message came as a surprise even to George William, who, though evidently pleased, looked askance at his Eléonore and grunted, "Hum, hum!" as though he fathomed the source whence the Imperial condescension sprang. He was right, for the support which Eléonore had given to the Emperor in influencing her husband to send troops to the campaign, and a charming letter she had written to him, had won the Emperor over to her side, and he had graciously acceded to her desire.

The next few years went by uneventfully. It seemed to the outside world that Eléonore was resting on her laurels, but in reality she was working for more. Meanwhile Sophie Dorothea was growing up a lovely child, petted and spoiled by her parents and the Court of Celle. There is a picture of her, painted about this time, in the Cumberland Gallery at Herrenhausen, the portrait of a beautiful child crowned with flowers and holding a great bundle of blossoms in her arms—a happy, winsome, radiant face; and, making allowance for the flattery of Court painters, it is certain that she must have been exceptionally lovely. The knowledge that the little girl was to inherit a large fortune made rumour already begin to find her a husband among the scions of the nobility. Among Sophie Dorothea's playmates in the gardens of

Celle was a handsome youth of some sixteen years, Count Philip Christopher von Königsmarck, son of a wealthy Swedish noble. The youthful Königsmarck was receiving his military training at Celle, and was staying there for a few years. It was not unusual at that time for a soldier to be trained in different Courts and serve in various campaigns, and so acquire a thorough knowledge of warfare. Count Philip came of a family with a brilliant military record. His father had held the office of Minister-General of Artillery in the service of the King of Sweden; his uncle, Count Otho William, was a marshal in the service of Louis XIV., and at the Court of the Grand Monarque became acquainted with Eléonore d'Olbreuse. He was a Huguenot like herself. This acquaintance probably formed the link which brought his nephew to Celle. Eléonore, though popular among her husband's subjects, was devoted to the land of her birth; she was always "the Frenchwoman," and was fond of appointing her compatriots to little places in her husband's Court, thereby causing some small jealousies.

There is not doubt that the boy and girl were thrown together, and a friendship sprang up between them; but at Sophie Dorothea's age we can hardly suppose that there was any deeper affection, though Königsmarck, for his part (and he was older), afterwards avowed that he had loved her from childhood. At the most they could only have been boy and girl playing at lovers. Count Philip, as we have seen, came of a distinguished family, even in his boyhood he was endowed with great personal beauty, and he was known to be heir to considerable wealth. Sophie Dorothea was an heiress, too, and she was then far removed from the rank of a princess. The possibility of a match between the two was not so remote as might have been imagined—at any rate their names

were linked together even at that early period in the little Court of Celle.

It is scarcely likely that Eléonore, Countess of Wilhelmsburg, shared these views for her daughter—in fact, we know that she looked higher. Among the neighboring German princes who had watched with benevolent interest the progress of Eléonore was Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel,¹ a cousin of George William, who later became co-regent with his brother, Rudolph Augustus, of the Duchy of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. He was a prince of considerable talents and artistic and literary gifts, a restless spirit always intriguing. He was a plain man, so plain that the Duchess d'Orleans called him "an ugly baboon." He early noted the great influence Eléonore had obtained over her slow, easy-going husband. He disliked the Bishop of Osnabrück and he knew of the Duchess Sophia's hatred of Eléonore. He was aware of the arrangement that had been made between the two brothers as to the succession to the Duchy, but nevertheless he thought it would be a good thing if he could manage to divert some of the wealth of the fat little Principality of Celle into his somewhat empty coffers. With this end in view he paid a visit to the Court of Celle, and treated Eléonore with every possible respect; in fact, he seems to have been genuinely impressed with her virtue and talents, and this homage, coming from a neighbouring prince, was grateful to Eléonore's self-esteem, for she was sensitive about her somewhat equivocal position. She recognised in him an ally, and laid the foundations of a friendship which lasted through life.

¹ Wolfenbüttel is an old town on the Oker, not far from Brunswick. The famous library contains Luther's Bible, and the ducal Schloss and mortuary chapel are the only other buildings worth mentioning. The seat of the Duchy was, however, at Brunswick.

After an interval, Duke Antony Ulrich came again to Celle, this time accompanied by his eldest son, Augustus Frederick. He communicated to Eléonore his wishes that his son should be betrothed to Sophie Dorothea, and she was nothing loth. But he pointed out that there was a difficulty, in that Sophie Dorothea was not a princess, and so could not make a regular marriage with his son. The way to overcome this obstacle was for George William to legally marry Eléonore, and raise her to the rank of duchess, and by this means Sophie Dorothea would become a princess, and equal in rank with Augustus Frederick. This reasoning was very grateful to Eléonore, for it showed the way to the goal of her ambition. She willingly agreed to work with Antony Ulrich for this object, and they took into their confidence a councillor named Schütz. Thus a distinct party was formed at Celle opposed to the interests of the Bishop of Osnabrück and in favour of those of Wolfenbüttel. For this the Duchess Sophia was largely to blame; she had so insulted and humiliated Eléonore that she had thrown herself into the rival camp. George William was so much under his wife's influence that he readily agreed to support her desire to become his Duchess, especially when his cousin and neighbour, Duke Antony Ulrich, told him she was in every way worthy of the position, and it was a reproach to him that he had not espoused her as his legal wife long before. He also viewed with favour the betrothal of Sophie Dorothea to Augustus Frederick, to which this was an indispensable preliminary. Everything was quickly arranged, and it was resolved to petition the Emperor. He was already friendly to Eléonore, and when her prayers were backed up by the powerful support of the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and her husband, they were sure to be granted.

The news of this double event soon reached Osnabrück and struck consternation into the hearts of Ernest Augustus and his wife. The Duchess Sophia was beside herself with rage, and wrote to tell the news to her niece, Elizabeth Charlotte d'Orleans. "We shall soon have to say 'Madame la Duchesse,'" she exclaimed, "to this little clot of dirt, for is there another name for that mean *intrigante* who comes from nowhere?" To which Elizabeth Charlotte replied: "Nowhere? My dear aunt, you are mistaken, if you will allow me to say so; she comes from a French family, and therefore from a fraud." But these feminine amenities, like the Bishop's protests, were unavailing; and soon Ernest Augustus and Sophia arrived at the conclusion that, as it was too late to prevent the mischief, the only thing remaining was to safeguard their interests as closely as possible. A fresh agreement was drawn up, lawyers and parchments were brought forth, and the contract between the two brothers was debated and fought out, clause by clause, like a Bill in Committee. The heckling took many months and bore fruit in many documents. The result of the controversy was at last summarised in a document duly signed by Duke George William, the Bishop of Osnabrück, and Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. The agreement was signed at Celle in May, 1676, and its main clauses may be summarised as follows:

Duke George William was allowed to "enter into Christian matrimony with the high-born lady Eléonore von Harburg, Countess of Wilhelmsburg"; and his daughter Sophie Dorothea, "promised to wife to His Serene Highness Augustus Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel," was to bear the title and arms of a princess by birth of Brunswick-Lüneburg. But a clause was added: "Any other children who may

be hereafter born in this wedlock must content themselves with the titles of Counts and Countesses of Wilhelmsburg, and they can make no pretences to the succession to the Duchy, which is bestowed on Ernest Augustus Bishop of Osnabrück and his heirs male."

The unfairness of this clause is patent; but it was somewhat modified by the fact that it was extremely unlikely Eléonore would bear her husband any more children. The Emperor's assent was proclaimed with some ceremony; a convocation of the deputies of the Principality was then assembled, and their agreement with the treaty duly notified. When all the legal preliminaries were over, George William led his morganatic wife of eleven years to the altar, and espoused her with much pomp and solemnity before all his Court, his cousin Antony Ulrich, and the little Sophie Dorothea, who must have wondered what it was all about. Ernest Augustus and Sophia were not present at these festivities, and they dissembled their ire as best they could. "Ah!" exclaimed the Bishop to his Court at Osnabrück on the night of the marriage, "my brother's French *madame* is not a jot the more his wife for being his Duchess; but she hath a dignity the more, and therewith may *madame* rest content." The jibe was duly reported to the Court of Celle; but Eléonore did not feel its sting. She had reached the summit of her ambition; she was the acknowledged consort of the sovereign of Celle; her child was ranked as princess and betrothed to a prince of equal rank. As Ernest Augustus had said, she could now afford to rest content.

CHAPTER III

THE WISDOM OF SERPENTS

(1676—1681)

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE sun of Eléonore's triumph had no sooner reached its meridian than its radiance began to be overcast. The first cloud was the death of the young Prince Augustus Frederick of Wolfenbüttel, who was killed by a cannon-ball at the siege of Phillipsburg a few months after his betrothal to Sophie Dorothea. His death, though it seemed comparatively unimportant, was destined to exercise an evil influence over the fortunes of the House of Celle, and it snapped the strongest band of union between the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party. The child Princess was happily unconscious of her loss. The betrothal was merely a matter of policy, to take effect later; the courtship was yet to come; and when the tidings came to Celle of the death of her betrothed she was too young to mourn him.

At first the Prince's death affected but little the *entente* between the Courts of Celle and Wolfenbüttel. Duke Antony Ulrich continued the close friend of Eléonore; he had another son, more nearly the age of Sophie Dorothea, and he held him in reserve; for the hour of a fresh arrangement was not yet, and other plans were in the air.

Meanwhile the little Princess blossomed into lovely girlhood, the spoiled darling of her father's Court. She was trained in all the accomplishments suitable to her rank, but the more solid part of her education seems to have been neglected, and with the promise of great beauty she early developed a passion for admiration which lasted all her life. Now that she was a princess her mother was careful to keep her away from all suitors not of equal rank. The early intimacy between the handsome young Königsmarck and Sophie Dorothea was broken off, and Königsmarck was given a hint to leave Celle. He repaired to England to finish his education, and he and the Princess did not meet again for many years, and by that time she was a wife and the mother of two children. Eléonore was justified of her wisdom, for when Sophie Dorothea was scarcely more than twelve years old her aunt, the Countess de Reuss, found in a drawer of the little Princess's *bonheur du jour* a love-letter from a Court page. The boy was banished for his audacity into lifelong exile, and the governess, whose connivance was responsible, was first imprisoned and then sent away in disgrace. The news of this affair, which was but a childish folly after all, got bruited abroad, and reached the ears of the alert Duchess Sophia. That lady was never tired of tirading against her sister-in-law, the "little clot of dirt" as she invariably calls her in her letters to her niece, and she seized on this incident to point her moral. "Is it not a pity," she wrote to the Duchess of Orleans, "that Ernest Augustus and myself should have made such a blunder and called to our Court that 'little clot of dirt,' the more so that we had at hand the Biegle, whom William liked well enough, though she was not so fascinating as his French vixen, who really is a splendid *Stückfleisch*. She would have done very well,

and at least have remained in her proper place. Never mind, Sophie Dorothea will avenge us all; she is a little *canaille*, and we shall see."

This, to put it mildly, shows a loose moral view on the part of the Duchess Sophia, to say nothing of the coarseness of expression. Her prophecy about the little Princess did not seem very likely of fulfilment then. The death of Augustus Frederick of Wolfenbüttel left the field open, and an alliance with the great house of Lüneburg-Celle was eagerly courted. The beauty and wealth of Sophie Dorothea, though she was only just in her teens, made her a desirable bride, and it was no longer the sons of the nobility who sought her hand, but princes of the reigning Houses of Europe. The Duke of Celle had almost arranged a match for his daughter with a younger son of the King of Denmark, when the Queen of Denmark actively interposed, and, with much violence and many expletives, broke off the match. This lady had once received Eléonore at dinner, but had refused her the kiss of honour. In revenge, Eléonore had commented on the badness of the Queen's *cuisine*; so they were far from friends. Probably the Duchess Sophia, who was very friendly with the Queen of Denmark, had a hand in bringing about the failure of these negotiations, for we find her writing: "Well done! Fancy a king's son for that bit of a bastard! Upon my word, one has to come from Poitou to be so impudent!"

The gibe was of course aimed at Eléonore, who found herself on this occasion outwitted by her sister-in-law. Up to this time Eléonore's influence with her husband was not sensibly impaired. His thoughts were still engrossed with her advancement, and he first made a new treaty, by which his wife was allowed the title of Duchess of Lüneburg-Celle; and, secondly, drew up an

agreement to further safeguard her rights and those of her daughter to the rich estates of Wilhelmsburg. Both these documents were countersigned by the wily Ernest Augustus, whose consent was necessary, but who was only induced to yield by a high price being paid for his complaisance.

The Duke of Celle thought his wife worthy of any pecuniary sacrifice at this time. Her conduct was so irreproachable as a wife and a mother that she won the esteem even of those who were prejudiced against her. Grave, dignified, and beautiful, she held her husband's truant affections much longer than any one would have supposed, and was careful by her conduct to make good the position to which she had been raised. Her bitterest enemies were unable to tarnish her fair name, and this is no mean tribute to her virtue and prudence when we remember the age in which she lived and the circumstances surrounding her. Under Eléonore's rule the Court of Celle became a model of decorum. The jovial Duke, though wealthy and hospitable, hated display and ostentation, and loved nothing so much as a quiet life. His tastes were those of an English country squire. He was a fine judge of wine, and had many rare vintages in his cellar; he had three hundred and seventy horses in his stables, mostly English or bred in England; his kennels, too, were largely filled with dogs of English breed. He was a mighty Nimrod, devoted to out-door sports. A little business with his Ministers and a good deal of hunting—that was his programme for the day, and in the evening he loved nothing better than to share the joys of the domestic hearth with his wife and child. Eléonore, unlike most ladies who have risen in the world, seemed equally averse to display for its own sake, and shunned rather than courted the trappings of State. So

the Court of Celle was peaceful and virtuous, perhaps a little dull.

It was far different at the Court of Hanover.

The death of Duke John Frederick without issue in 1679 had now brought Ernest Augustus and Sophia to reign over Hanover as well as Osnabrück. Duke John Frederick was not greatly mourned, and his reign, though merry, had been brief. Like his brothers, he was fond of Italy, and acquired there a love of foreign ways and a liking for the Roman Catholic religion, to which he became a convert. Louis XIV., who was by way of being a defender of the faith, gave this ducal convert a handsome pension, and treated him with marked favour. John Frederick's eyes were dazzled by the glory of the Grand Monarque, whose splendour was the wonder of Europe, and he tried to turn Hanover into an imitation Versailles: pseudo-classical statues were erected in the gardens; fountains were dotted about the terraces; there were fireworks, masquerades, and pastoral plays, Italian singers and French dancers; many foreign *monsignori* flitted about the Court, and mass was again sung in the churches. The honest Hanoverians rubbed their eyes and knew not what to make of it all. But alien though their Duke was in some things, he had one taste in common with his long-suffering subjects—he loved his beer, and, after a prolonged course of hard drinking, he died from an overspell of it. As the Duchess Sophia wrote, "He died as a true German should, glass in hand."

This "true German" being gathered to his fathers, Duke Ernest Augustus and Duchess Sophia made haste to reign in his stead. Sophia thanked Heaven for having thus placed her husband out of the reach of his enemies, "as which the whole Court of Celle had now to be regarded." It was indeed a notable accession of

dignity and wealth. Both were ambitious and loved money and ostentation; they now had a chance of gratifying their tastes. In a smaller way Ernest Augustus had also imitated Louis XIV.'s Court at Osnabrück, and it seemed to that "most Christian" monarch that the new Duke of Hanover would follow his brother in matters of religion. He therefore dispatched a plenipotentiary, Gourville, to sound him on the subject and to offer the same bait in the way of pension as he had dangled before the eyes of John Frederick. But Ernest Augustus was now not so needy, and he had other objects in view, so he replied oracularly that though no doubt a change of religion would be advantageous to his House he himself was too old to change. All religions were much the same to Sophia; but she disliked being meddled with in spiritual matters, and had her own interests, too—her English interests, then remote—which would certainly be imperilled by a change of faith. So the worthy pair, after taking counsel together, hit on a compromise by not educating their daughter Sophia Charlotte in any faith, so that she might marry the most promising prince who offered himself, whether he were Catholic or Protestant. When sounded later on the subject of her daughter's faith, the Duchess answered, "She is of no religion as yet." It was lucky that Sophia turned a deaf ear to the blandishments of the French King and the Pope, or the House of Hanover and the Protestant succession would never have ruled in England.

Though under the new *régime* the Court of Hanover differed in religious ceremonial from that of Versailles, in other respects it was a bad imitation, and the grafting of spurious French architecture on the little mediæval German town produced many incongruous effects, as incongruous as the aping of French manners and French

morals. For the Court of Hanover imitated not only the pleasures of Versailles, but also its vices. Unlike his brother George William, matrimony had effected no change in the laxities of Ernest Augustus, and the explanation is probably to be found in the fact that his was a marriage of policy, while the other's was a marriage of love. Ernest Augustus was a man of six times the ability of George William. He was selfish and scheming, but there was a certain splendid good nature about him, and though his Court was dissolute, it was always brilliant. The money for his pleasures, for he was as great a spend-thrift as his brother was the reverse of one, he raised either by squeezing George William or by equipping regiments of his subjects and selling them to foreign service, as, for instance, to fight the Emperor's enemies on the Danube. This was in the approved style of the Grand Monarque, who always had a war on hand by way of a kingly pastime. Louis XIV., like Solomon of old, had also his beautiful favourites in great array, who reaped rich rewards of wealth and influence. This period of European history may be said to mark the apotheosis of military and political adventurers and Royal mistresses. There was no Court without its adventurers, and a king was hardly a king without a bevy of mistresses. Many of them were women of noble birth, who embarked on the career with the encouragement of their parents and guardians, and even of their husbands. Louise de Querouaille, afterwards Duchess of Portsmouth, went over from France to England to win the favour of Charles II. In the same way Clara Elizabeth and Catherine Marie von Meissenburg journeyed to Osnabrück in the hope of capturing the good will of Ernest Augustus and his son.

Clara Elizabeth and Catherine Marie were of noble

birth. Their father, Count Carl Philip von Meissenburg, was a needy military adventurer, and their faces were their only fortune. Their good looks, combined with much impudence, a lively wit, and an utter absence of principle, sufficed to form a very attractive pair in those days. When they were only in their teens Count von Meissenburg took his daughters to Paris with the hope of seeing them shine at the Court of Louis XIV., a sort of Mecca to which all these worldly pilgrims were then bound. But the established Royal favourites there did not view the fair intruders with favour, and gave them a hint that it would be better to decamp, or Paris would soon be too hot to hold them. The Meissenburgs, who were poor and therefore powerless, needed no second warning. Fear lent them wings; they packed up with all despatch, and, looking about for a likely spot to push their fortunes, they hit upon the little Court of Ernest Augustus, and set out thither with all speed.

The Court was then at Osnabrück, and it so chanced that the *demoiselles* Meissenburg arrived just when the two eldest sons of Ernest Augustus, George Louis and Frederick Augustus, had returned from their travels, accompanied by their governors Platen and Busche. The needy Count lost no time in presenting his daughters at Court, and evidently they created a favourable impression, for we find them helping at a *fête* in honour of the young Princes' return. The *demoiselles* Meissenburg, who were fresh from all the graces and amusements of Versailles, composed a little pastoral play in French, which they craved permission to perform before the Duke and Duchess, and the performance was the most successful feature of the festival. It was given at night in the gardens, which were illuminated for the occasion. The young ladies appeared, as befitted their pastoral

simplicity, in the guise of shepherdesses, and recited their lines so prettily, and danced and sang in so charming a way that they delighted their audience and especially won the hearts of the governors Platen and Busche. Having made so favourable an impression, the sisters remained at Osnabrück to follow up their advantage. It suited them well. It was a cheap town to live in; they had the *entrée* of the Court and the free-and-easy air of the place gave them room to develop their schemes. At that time the young adventuresses had to moderate their ambitions. Ernest Augustus was far above them, and Prince George Louis was only a boy, and was sent away directly on military service. But meantime the Meissenburgs made the best of their opportunities. Platen and Busche were both rising men, and enjoyed the confidence of the Court. Failing higher game, the sisters resolved on making a conquest of them, and they unmasked their batteries with such success that before long they were comfortably settled in life, Clara Elizabeth as the wife of Platen, and Catherine Marie as the wife of Busche.

Attached now for good or evil to the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the sisters shared in its improved fortunes, and when the Court of Ernest Augustus migrated to Hanover they went there too.

Of the two sisters, Clara Elizabeth, now Madame Platen, was immeasurably the superior, if not in youth and beauty, in cleverness and audacity. This woman is one of the worst instances in history of the evil influence of the Court mistress. She had no redeeming qualities; she was unscrupulous, ambitious, and shamelessly corrupt. She was possessed of the immense power of one who has a fixed purpose in life, and who will stick at nothing to obtain it. Having obtained the first object of her ambition, a safe and respectable position, she was

wise enough to recognize an identity of interest with her husband, and to see that as he advanced she would advance with him. To this end she sought to obtain influence over Ernest Augustus. Platen, after his marriage, was promoted to a confidential position, and when the Court went to Hanover he was raised to the responsible post of Minister. His wife thus found herself within the charmed circle and within touch of what she most desired—power. A masterful disposition gave her complete sway over her husband; she dictated to Platen, who, in turn, advised Ernest Augustus. But this was too round about a method for Madame Platen, who wished to be next the Duke himself. Before long a post was found for her in the service of the Duchess Sophia, and thus she came frequently before the notice of Ernest Augustus. She played her cards very discreetly, and, with the connivance of her husband, brought all her arts, flatteries, and fascinations to bear upon the Duke; so that Ernest Augustus was first astonished at her cleverness, next flattered by her pretended admiration for himself, and then fascinated by her good looks. In a short time her influence over him was supreme. Not content with having won the Duke, Madame Platen determined also to bring the son under her influence. When Prince George Louis returned from his military service she threw her sister, Madame Busche, in his way. Her sister was younger and prettier than Madame Platen, but much less clever and wholly under the influence of this imperious woman. The precocious young prince fell captive to the charms of Madame Busche, who also had a complaisant husband. Thus Madame Platen became all-powerful at the Court of Hanover. It is an ugly chapter in the history of the Hanoverian House, yet one that cannot be ignored.

Some Court mistresses have been real politicians, and their influence on public affairs—Madame de Maintenon's for instance—was for good and not evil. But Madame Platen was hardly a political woman of the first rank; she was incapable of taking a wide view of affairs, and her efforts were directed towards the immediate aggrandisement of the little Principality of Hanover, without a thought of the larger interests outside. Into the family feud between Celle and Hanover she entered with zest, and made common cause with Ernest Augustus and Sophia against Eléonore and the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party. She noted the growing intimacy between George William and Antony Ulrich, which she shrewdly suspected boded no good to the fortunes of the Court of Hanover. Her methods were essentially those of the backstairs, and she persuaded Ernest Augustus to employ spies at Celle to report all that went on there. In this way she acquired a knowledge of the disposition of the Ministers who held office at Celle. The most powerful of them all was Bernstorff, the Duke's Prime Minister. Bernstorff was an ambitious and avaricious man with little principle, who had already shown jealousy of the influence which Eléonore exercised over her husband and resented her interference in affairs of State. Madame Platen saw in him an instrument for her designs; she approached him with many promises, and some more substantial pledges from Ernest Augustus—*item*, a gold snuff-box set with diamonds, and similar tokens of good will. Bernstorff was quite willing to listen to these overtures; he was anxious to become a great landed proprietor, and Ernest Augustus promised to advance his wishes in this and other respects if he would carry out his plans. He was opposed to the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party headed by the Duchess Eléonore, he desired noth-

ing better than her downfall; so he took the bribe, and confidential communications were opened up with Hanover. In particular he warned Ernest Augustus of the schemes of Duke Antony Ulrich, who was now urging the betrothal of his second son to the little Sophie Dorothea. These communications were not nominally carried on between responsible Ministers, but between a spy at Celle and Madame Platen at Hanover, so that if anything transpired they could both be disowned by the responsible Governments; but in reality Madame Platen was dictating the policy of Hanover.

A pretty picture of moral and political corruption, it must be confessed. One wonders what the haughty Duchess Sophia thought of it all, and by what inexplicable means this inscrutable woman was brought to become a passive witness of the double capture by audacious adventuresses of her husband and her son. Her policy was to consistently ignore anything she could not help; and in this case she seems to have offered no protest. The key to this riddle is probably to be found in her character. The moral objection would not appeal to her, for though the Duchess Sophia in her own personal conduct was absolutely above reproach, and there is abundant evidence to prove she held that the virtue of princesses should be above suspicion, yet she had been trained in a school and an age which did not demand an equal standard of morality from men as from women, least of all from princes. In her day women of the Platen type were as much a part of the *entourage* of a Court as the lacqueys in the kitchen or the grooms in the stables, and since this was so, why not Madame Platen as well as another? Sophia had done her duty to Ernest Augustus in every sense of the word. She had been a good and faithful wife; she had upheld the dignity of the Courts

of Osnabrück and Hanover; she had borne her husband six children, five sons and a daughter; and though they had never any love in the highest sense for one another, yet in time affection seems to have sprung up between this curious couple, and they got on very well together, mainly on the principle of leaving each other alone. According to his lights, and possibly her lights also, Ernest Augustus was a good husband; he always treated his consort with profound respect, and outwardly he fulfilled the letter of his contract with her, it was only in the spirit he failed, but Sophia probably did not care about that. She was his Duchess, the mother of his sons, the great lady of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and that sufficed her. She was fond of her children, too, especially of the younger boys and her daughter, but for George Louis, her eldest son, she had very little love. She therefore probably regarded his affair with Madame Busche with indifference. Nor did religious scruples enter to any extent. She was a free-thinking woman, who, from a philosophic eminence, looked down upon all dogma with contempt. "The Princess Sophia," says Dean Lockier, "was a woman of good sense and excellent conversation. I was very well acquainted with her. She sat very loose in her religious principles, and used to take a particular pleasure in setting a heretic (infidel) wherever she could meet such, and one of her chaplains disputing together." This is a quaint characteristic; and we may picture Sophia's face as she baited her chaplain with some truculent infidel, and chuckled while they fought together, finally dismissing them with, "A plague on both your houses."¹

¹ A similar pastime was frequently indulged in by her granddaughter-in-law, Queen Caroline, wife of George II., who was also

Hitherto we have viewed this Princess in a somewhat unamiable light—the side she showed to Eléonore; it is only fair to turn the other side of the shield. Her failings were the failings of her times, her virtues were all her own. Reared in a dissolute Court, married into a vicious one, no word of scandal was ever breathed against her moral character. She remained beyond and apart, a serene and haughty figure, head and shoulders above the mean, coarse, voluptuous, lying crowd with which she was surrounded. Whatever was pure and of good repute, whatever made for the higher and intellectual life, turned to Sophia at the Court of Hanover. She was a woman of great parts, speaking five languages—Low Dutch, German, French, Italian, and English—fluently, and was learned in the literature of them all. She attracted to Hanover some of the choicest intellectual spirits of the age, and among them was the great and learned Leibnitz, whose friend and patron she was. In turn he warmly respected and admired her: she was the “Serena” of his letters, and together they discussed those subtle philosophies beside which such things as Court intrigues and Court courtesans were as nothing worth.

It was doubtless her communing in these serene altitudes, together with the considerations before mentioned, which enabled the Duchess Sophia to ignore Madame Platen and lesser annoyances. Outwardly she received from the Court mistress every mark of respect and homage. However impudent, brazen, and intriguing Madame Platen might be, she was always submissive and decorous before the Duchess Sophia, always her very humble lady-in-waiting. The Duchess was not of a jealous temperament, and in matters where her rank

most tolerant of her husband's mistresses. No doubt she learned both these peculiarities from Sophia.

and her rights were not imperilled her heart did not enter. Madame Platen would always be Madame Platen; she could never rise, for instance, to the heights of the upstart d'Olbreuse, and arrogate to herself the position of an equal of the daughter of kings; and so long as she kept her place, what matter? Besides, according to her lights, the woman was working for the greater glory of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg and against the hated Eléonore. These seem the ostensible grounds on which it can be explained why the Duchess Sophia allowed, without protest, such a power near her throne. But there was perhaps another reason, too, which overshadowed all the rest.

The great and splendid inheritance of the Throne of England already began to be dangled before Sophia's eyes like a beacon light. English events absorbed her to the exclusion of others, and the affairs of the Court of Hanover were mere village politics beside them. Sophia had one virtue for which every Englishman will love her. She loved "her country," as she called England, with all her heart and soul and strength; "her country," which she had never seen, which she was destined never to see; "her country," over which her grandfather had reigned a wellnigh absolute monarch; "her country," to which her mother had gone back, as to home, to end her days; "her country," for which her brother, the dashing Prince Rupert, had fought on the King's side throughout the Great Rebellion; "her country," over which her son was to reign and her children's children from generation to generation. The reproach of being German and alien in sympathy, later, often urged against the House of Hanover, could never have been brought against Sophia, for her heart was as "entirely English" as Queen Anne's. She early imbibed her love for England and things Eng-

lish. She spoke the language fluently, far better than many a Stuart. She was learned in England's history, its customs, and its laws. She had an English maid always with her. In her youth she had been within measurable distance of becoming Queen Consort of England; in her old age she was within an ace of being Queen Regnant.¹ It is a pity she was never Queen of England. She would have been another and a wiser Elizabeth, whom in many ways she strongly resembled—in her love of statecraft, her broad and liberal view of things, her contempt for jarring creeds, her wisdom and resource. Yes, it is a thousand pities she was never Queen of England; she would have made a wiser ruler than any of her Stuart cousins, and a far better than any of her descendants, save one only—the present illustrious and revered occupant of the Throne, whose long and beneficent reign has won for her the first place among England's monarchs of any dynasty.

¹ She died less than three months before Queen Anne.

CHAPTER IV

PRINCE GEORGE GOES A-WOOING

(1681—1682)

He that travels in a country before he has some entrance into the language, goeth to school and not to travel.—BACON.

FROM her watch-tower at Hanover the Duchess Sophia followed with keen interest the course of events in England, an interest which increased every day of her life until at last it became an absorbing passion. She spared no pains to keep up a good understanding between herself and her English relatives. When Charles II. was restored to the throne of his ancestors, she sent him a warm letter of congratulation, written in the oddest French, which is still preserved among the Lambeth manuscripts. Throughout her cousin's reign Sophia continued to watch affairs in England. She noted Charles's childless marriage to Catherine of Braganza.¹ She noted the dislike and jealousy of the people of England to Popery, and the conversion of the heir to the throne, the Duke of York, to the Roman Catholic religion, and his consequent unpopularity. She noted the marriage of his eldest daughter, Princess Mary of York, to William of Orange, and the childless condition of the Dutchman and his spouse. Last of all, she noted

¹ "She [Sophia] told me," writes Lord Dartmouth many years later, "that she was once like to have been married to King Charles II., which would not have been worse for the nation, considering how many children she had brought, to which I most sincerely agreed."

that the Princess Anne of York, on whom it seemed likely the Crown of England would devolve in the course of nature, had reached a marriageable age, and she saw in her son, George Louis, the husband for her, and prepared to act.

George Louis had now attained his majority. He was not an ideal lover, by no means a Prince Charming, though so far as looks were concerned he might have passed muster. He was about the middle height, dark, with strongly marked features, but he carried himself badly, and was awkward of figure, still more awkward in manner. He favoured neither of his parents. Ernest Augustus gilded his faults by a certain generosity and refinement, which earned for him the title of "the gentleman of Germany." George Louis was niggardly, he had no charm of manner, he was vindictive, sullen, slow of speech, and altogether unprepossessing. His mother, as we have seen, was a woman of high culture and education and a ready wit, which caused her to be known as "the merry *débonnaire* princess of Germany." George Louis's education had been neglected, he had no love of learning, and an intense dislike of literature, nor had he any accomplishments save the love of music characteristic of his race. But, on the other hand, he was a good soldier, a man of the camp rather than of the Court. His tutors threw up their hands in despair when they endeavoured to teach him anything from books, but he took to military service as a duck takes to water. He served under his father, when only fifteen, in the campaign in 1675, and fought bravely at Consarbrück, at the siege of Treves, and in the campaign on the Rhine; he was at the sieges of Maestricht and Charleroy, and again at the battle near St. Denis, and on every occasion he distinguished himself. He had his own rough code of

honour. He never told a lie. He possessed in a marked degree that courage which even their bitterest detractors cannot withhold from the princes of the House of Hanover. Yet with all his military instinct he loved not bloodshed for its own sake; he was a man of peace. He had humanity for the wounded on the field of battle, and could respect a fallen foe. His methods were brutal, but straightforward; he was no intriguer, and, though profligate, he was honest.

Ernest Augustus was in despair at the rude manners of his boorish son, and thought that travel would improve him. As he was not over welcome at home, he sent him to the Court of France, to pick up a little polish for one thing, and, for another, to try to improve matters between Louis XIV. and himself. But the young Prince returned much the same. He was not a diplomat, and his efforts in that direction were not a success.

It was then that the Duchess Sophia broached her plan of sending him to England as a suitor of the Princess Anne of York. It was emphatically *her* plan. Madame Platen had nothing to do with it, was not even consulted; in fact, Sophia never recognised in any way this woman's influence. The moment could not have been more propitious. The anti-Popery feeling was running high in England, and already overtures had been made by the Protestant party to the House of Hanover. Duke Ernest Augustus did not think much of these overtures; the prospect was too vague. England was to him little more than a geographical expression, and the violent events of recent years filled him with distrust. He had witnessed in England the Great Rebellion, the downfall of the Monarchy, the execution of the King, the setting up of the Commonwealth, the downfall of the Commonwealth, the restoration of the Monarchy, and

now, lo and behold! the Puritan party seemed to be rising again. He did not trust a nation which indulged in such extremes, and he regarded England much as the average Englishman to-day regards France. But he was not averse from the idea of marrying his eldest son to a Princess of the Royal House of England; in any case she would have a goodly dower, and so, to please his wife and his own inclinations, he consented to find the money to dispatch George Louis to England in a manner befitting his rank and errand.

The Duchess Sophia was delighted with her husband's willingness to fall in with her plan (she little knew that all the while behind her back he was intriguing for another match for Prince George, should this fall through), and she took the keenest interest in her son's visit. Another also took an interest, that born intriguer, William of Orange, the husband of the Princess Mary of York, who was jealously watching events in England. When he heard of George Louis's intended visit he scented mischief ahead, and sent a flattering invitation to Hanover asking the young Prince to spend a month with him at the Hague on his way to England. Sophia was glad that her son should visit his Stuart cousins in Holland, and the invitation was accepted. It was a fatal error of policy, for William soon learnt from the young Prince the object of his mission, and immediately set to work to render it null and void. He, too, was half a Stuart, a grandson of Charles I., and the prospect of the Crown of England had its charms for him also; he coveted it not merely for his wife. If George Louis married the Princess Anne, and the Princess of Orange died before her (as in fact she did, though not till she had been Queen), William, her consort, would probably have to give way to their prior claims; for George Louis

was a Protestant, and only one step further removed from the blood royal of England than himself; therefore it behoved him to move heaven and earth to prevent this match.

He had spies in England, at Hanover, and at Celle, and he set them all at work. His agent in Hanover was probably Madame Platen, and at Celle Bernstorff, both of whom were open to bribes. Their work was simple: they were to represent to their respective princes how much more suitable and advantageous it would be if George Louis married Sophie Dorothea. Of course, they could do nothing more than prepare the ground, and drop a hint now and then; but even that would bear fruit. In England William had emissaries everywhere, at Court, and even in the household of Princess Anne.

Meanwhile the unsuspecting George Louis parted from his cousins, William and Mary, with many expressions of good will, and set sail for England. He anchored off Greenwich early in December, 1680 (New Style). His arrival was well timed, from the popularity point of view. Public feeling was excited over the so-called Popish plots, and the unpopularity of the Duke of York was at its height. The Bill which excluded him from the succession to the throne because he was a Papist was before Parliament, and in the event of its passing into law George Louis's prospects as a Protestant descendant of the Stuarts would be improved. The Bill did pass with acclamation, but the King dissolved Parliament immediately.

George Louis's arrival, though his errand was well known, does not seem to have been equally popular with the Court; his barque lay in the mud off Greenwich, but no one was sent to look out for him or to bid him welcome. When he landed in England again it was as

King; but that is another story. At this time George Louis did not expect great things; he sent to his uncle Rupert, and presumably explained matters to him. Henceforward things went smoothly. What happened is best told in a letter which he wrote to his mother, the Duchess Sophia. This letter, which is written with much sprightliness in the original French, does not bear out the assertion that George Louis was very illiterate.

“LONDON, *December 30* (Old Style),

“*January 10* (New Style), 1860-1861.

“After wishing Your Serene Highness a very happy New Year, I will not delay letting you know that I arrived here on December 6, having remained one day at anchor at Grunnevitsch [Greenwich] till M. Beck went on shore to take a house for me. He did not fail to find out Uncle Robert [Prince Rupert] and let him know of my arrival at Grunnevitsch, who did not delay telling King Charles. His Majesty immediately appointed me apartments at Weithal [Whitehall]. M. Beck requested Uncle Robert to excuse me; but King Charles, when he spoke thus, insisted that it should absolutely be so, for he would treat me *en cousin*, and after that no more could be said. Therefore M. Cotterel came on the morrow to find me out with a barque of the King, and brought me therein to Weithal. I had not been there more than two hours when Milord Hamilton came to take me to the King, who received me most obligingly. Uncle Robert had preceded me, and was at Court when I saluted King Charles. In making my obeisance to the King, I did not omit to give him the letter of Your Serene Highness, after which he spoke of Your Highness, and said ‘that he remembered you very well.’ When he had talked with me some time he went to the Queen [Catherine of Braganza], and as

soon as I arrived he made me kiss the hem of Her Majesty's petticoat (*qui l'on fit baiser la juppe à la reine*).

"The next day I saw the Princess of York [the Princess Anne], and I saluted her by kissing her, with the consent of the King. The day after, I went to visit Uncle Robert, who received me in bed, for he has a malady in his leg which makes him very often keep his bed. It appears that it is so without any pretext, and that he has to take care of himself. He had not failed of coming to see me one day.

"All the milords came to see me *sans pretendre la main chez moi*. Milord Greue [Grey] came to me very often indeed.

"They cut off the head of Lord Stafford yesterday, and made no more ado about it than if they had chopped off the head of a pullet.

"I have no more to tell Your Serene Highness, wherefore I conclude, and remain your very humble son and servant,

"GEORGE LOUIS."

Prince George Louis's wooing did not prosper as might have been expected from so promising a beginning. The Princess Anne at that time was seventeen years old, in the full bloom of youth, and had a considerable share of good looks of a somewhat florid description. Accustomed as she was to all the grace and splendour of the English Court, Princess Anne looked with little favour on the awkward advances of her German cousin, who could not speak a word of the English language, and whose person was not pleasing nor his manner courtly. Naturally reserved, he was very shy when he was first presented to her, and awkward in saluting her, and William of Orange caused it to be whispered to Anne that the Prince's backwardness was owing to an irrepressible

disgust which he felt for her at first sight, and that he had spoken slightly of her charms. This was enough for Anne, whose vanity was easily wounded; she would have nothing more to say to her loutish lover, and cherished a lifelong resentment at the imaginary affront.

Neither the King nor the Duke of York favoured the suit of the Hanoverian Prince, because he was unjustly supposed to be in league with the Prince of Orange. But still George Louis lingered in England, and paid a visit to Cambridge, where he was received with every mark of honour and given the degree of Doctor of Laws. Cambridge was thus early in the field to demonstrate her loyalty to the House of Hanover. When it is remembered that the Prince was a stranger to England, and could not speak a word of the language, it is evident there must have been some political motive on the part of the University. It was to be found in party feeling, which then ran high. Parliament met at Oxford, and was still clamouring for the Exclusion Bill, but the King put his foot down, absolutely refused to alter the succession, and again dissolved Parliament. This was a severe blow to the Protestant party and incidentally to the Protestant princes.

Soon after, George Louis was summoned home abruptly, and he returned to Hanover in the spring. Ernest Augustus, seeing there was no hope of his son marrying the Princess Anne, became impatient about the English succession, for which he did not care a fig; besides, there was a tendency in England to draw the young Prince into intrigues, and both Sophia and himself always opposed anything which might tend to embarrass the reigning House of England. In this respect the conduct of the House of Hanover forms an honourable contrast to that of William of Orange. Her son's return

empty-handed was a bitter disappointment to Sophia, who saw her English hopes shattered. She withdrew once more to the consolations of philosophy, conscious that the failure of her plan had brought with it a waning of her influence with her husband. George Louis had been sent on a wild-goose chase, and Ernest Augustus had to pay the bill, which he did with very ill grace; for, though he was lavish with money where his own pleasures were concerned, he had the German thriftiness about spending it on others.

Madame Platen's star now came into the ascendant, and she urged with added force and plausibility the scheme of a marriage between George Louis and his cousin, Sophie Dorothea. Of course, all had to be done behind the back of the Duchess Sophia, who regarded the Court of Celle with unconcealed aversion. Ernest Augustus had not the same feeling of personal bitterness against Eléonore as his wife, and he was quite willing to make terms with George William, or, for a matter of that, with her, if he could thereby add to his fortunes, and he therefore gave ready ear to the idea. The advantages of the union were many and obvious; the young lady was rich, her dower would be large, the marriage would unite the severed principalities of Celle and Hanover, and so add enormously to the power of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg; it would end an unpleasant family feud, fraught with weakness and danger to both parties, and would set up again an identity of interest between the brothers. All this would happen if Sophie Dorothea married George Louis; but if she married a rival prince, under the present strained relations, dangers would arise which it would be impossible to foresee. The breach would widen, and the Principality of Hanover would be threatened with a foe at its very doors.

From a political point of view nothing could be better than this marriage—for Hanover. At Celle the ground was not unprepared; Platen had communicated with Bernstorff, and that pliant tool had also sounded George William. As the continual dropping of water wears away a stone, so Bernstorff, by hint and inuendo, was slowly undermining the influence of the Duchess of Celle. He traded on the fact that she was "the Frenchwoman," he exaggerated the jealousy which arose from so many French officers holding commissions in the ducal army, he hinted discreetly to the Duke that the neighbouring princes and even the Emperor were laughing at him because he allowed himself to be ruled by his wife, and he particularly opposed the growing power of the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party.

Duke Antony Ulrich had by this time brought forward his eldest surviving son, a handsome prince, as a suitor for the hand of Sophie Dorothea. The young couple were of a suitable age, and Eléonore warmly encouraged the match. If the matter had rested with her, the betrothal would long since have taken place. Her first check had come when she proposed it to George William. To her astonishment he held back. He was superstitious, and thought the untoward ending of the first match between his daughter and a Prince of the House of Wolfenbüttel was an ill-omen. He did not approve of her marriage with the younger brother when she had been betrothed to the elder, for in Germany at that time betrothal was almost as solemn a compact as marriage itself. These were the reasons he put forward for opposing the betrothal; but Eléonore talked him over, and at last he was induced to unwillingly give what was practically a consent, on the condition that the betrothal should be postponed until Sophie Dorothea was sixteen,

and meantime the arrangement should be kept strictly secret. With this Eléonore and Antony Ulrich had to be content. There is little doubt that it was Bernstorff who prompted the delay, just as he now used the time gained to further oppose the match and to urge the Hanoverian claims.

So matters went on until September, 1682, when Sophie Dorothea was to attain her sixteenth birthday. In some way the half promise which the Duke of Celle had given leaked out, and also the news that Duke Antony Ulrich and his son were coming to Celle for the celebration of the Princess's birthday on September 15. Bernstorff immediately communicated this to the Court of Hanover. The news filled Ernest Augustus and his advisers, the Platens, with dismay; they had been intriguing for months, and now, through a sudden move on the part of the Duchess of Celle, their schemes were on the edge of failure. If Bernstorff had not discovered the plot they would certainly have been lost. In any case the time for talking was past, the time for action had come; Antony Ulrich and the young Prince were actually on their way to Celle, and Eléonore was arranging a great festival, when no doubt the betrothal would be publicly announced. Then it would be too late. Owing to the badness of the roads, the news only arrived at Hanover on the morning of the day before. What was to be done? If Ernest Augustus were to go to Celle, Eléonore would guess the reason of his sudden appearance and outwit him. To send George Louis would be to court failure (they had had two experiences of *his* diplomacy); to send a Minister would be useless; to send Madame Platen an insult. There was only one person who could hope to carry the difficult business through and that was the Duchess Sophia. She had influence with the Duke of

Celle. Her quarrel had been with his wife and not with him. He had always treated her with honour and even affection; probably he felt some twinge of shame for the shabby way he had behaved to her years before. Her descent from a long line of kings, her high position, learning, and virtues, her wit and resource, all made her the ideal ambassadress for such a mission. George William would be flattered by her condescension in coming to Celle; he was already favourably disposed to the match, and he could not refuse her. But would she go?

It was not without misgiving that Ernest Augustus repaired to his Duchess, laid bare his plan, and implored her aid. It came to her as a revelation, and at first the haughty Sophia would have none of it. She hated the d'Olbreuse, and despised Sophie Dorothea because she was her daughter; she had never recognised them, never visited them, and always treated them as dirt beneath her feet. The last thing she contemplated or wished was to be brought into closer alliance with them. But the arguments and entreaties of Ernest Augustus had weight with her; he reminded her that her English plan had failed, and urged that she should make some compensation for the expense and disappointment which she had brought upon him. She recognised the force of this reasoning; she was just now suffering all the humiliations of defeat, and if she could carry this difficult thing through it would restore her lost prestige. She knew well enough—it did not need to be explained to her—the substantial advantages that would accrue from the union of the duchies and the bringing of a large dowry into the coffers of Hanover. She saw, too, how disastrous it would be for the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party to triumph and Eléonore to be victorious. The last thought was perhaps the most powerful of all; by consenting to go to Celle she would outwit her

rival, wound her to the heart, frustrate her most cherished plan, and ruin her influence for ever. So Sophia consented to undertake the mission, and, with characteristic energy, prepared to start at once. The state chariot and Mecklenburg horses were ordered out, and with postillions and outriders the haughty Duchess set forth. There was no time to be lost; she must reach Celle before to-morrow morning or the Wolfenbüttels would be there before her.

It was a dull evening in mid-September when Sophia rumbled in her heavy coach out of Hanover and over the rough road towards Celle. Celle is distant from Hanover about twenty miles as the crow flies; but because of heavy rains many of the roads were impassable, and the coach had to travel by a circuitous route. It took the Duchess all night to reach her journey's end.

CHAPTER V
THE SACRIFICE
(1682)

After this alliance
Let tigers match with hinds, and wolves with sheep,
And every creature couple with its foe.

DRYDEN.

THE mists of a raw September morning hung about Celle as the Duchess Sophia drove in from the Hanover road, stiff and cold from her long journey. One wonders what thoughts crowded into her brain as the coach rattled through the quaint streets of the little town. She had not been here for seventeen years never since Eléonore had queened it at the Castle, and she had come to-day to disqueen her, by destroying her influence and bringing to naught her most cherished scheme. Yet she would have to make peace with her, turn to her a smiling face, and enter into close and intimate relations with the woman she hated, insulted, and despised. It must have been with mingled feelings that Sophia saw the towers of the mighty Schloss rise before her.

The sleepy sentinel, recognising the unaccustomed liveries of Hanover, hurried to let down the drawbridge, raise the portcullis, and salute the great Duchess. The moment the coach entered the courtyard Sophia alighted. A glance sufficed to show her she was not too late, the Wolfenbüttel equipage was not yet there. Brushing

aside ceremony, she, who was so great a stickler for etiquette, demanded to see the Duke of Celle at once. The few half-awakened servants who happened to be up as she entered the Castle, astonished at the unexpected apparition, explained to her that His Highness had not yet risen, he was even now dressing, but would soon be able to descend and receive her in a fitting manner. But Sophia was in no humour to tarry; ascending the great staircase, she haughtily demanded to be shown at once to the Duke's chamber, in bed or out of bed, dressed or undressed, her business was one which would admit of no delay. The flurried page conducted her to the door of the ducal apartment, and here she ordered him to leave, and announced herself by promptly opening the door and walking in upon the astonished Duke, who was then at his dressing-table.

Of all the people in the world, his sister-in-law was the one George William least expected to see; but Sophia cut short his exclamations and apologies by announcing that she had travelled all night to present in person her congratulations to himself and his Duchess on the occasion of the sixteenth birthday of their daughter, and wound up by asking curtly, "Where is your wife?" The Duke pointed to the half-open door of the bedchamber adjoining, where Eléonore was still in bed—a capacious bed in a comparatively small room with the ceiling decorated with a realistic fresco of the legend of Leda and the Swan.¹ Eléonore, hearing voices, called out to her husband to ask who came thus early to disturb their rest. The Duchess Sophia, through the half-open door, repeated in a loud voice what she had already said to the Duke, thus breaking the ice of the awkward first greet-

¹ The room remains the same to this day,

ing with her enemy, and, without waiting to hear what the perturbed Eléonore had to say in reply, she turned to the Duke, and, addressing him in Low Dutch, a language she knew his wife did not understand, she intimated that she had something important to say to him alone. George William glanced meaningly at the half-open door, behind which was the flurried Eléonore, and suggested they should wait a little while and discuss the matter elsewhere. But Sophia cut short his excuses and proposals by answering that what she had to say must be said there and then. She could not be so rude as to shut the door in Eléonore's face, so she drew up a chair by the Duke's dressing-table, and, continuing to speak in Low Dutch, proceeded to unfold her scheme—first exacting from him a promise that, if he did not accede to her wishes, he was never to divulge a syllable of what she had come to say.

In a few vigorous sentences she skilfully explained the real object of her visit. She began by deploring the family^s feud which had too long existed between the Courts of Hanover and Celle, and expatiated upon the desirability of reconciliation and the advantages which would inevitably follow a closer union. George William, who by this time had made a shrewd guess at what she was driving, followed her with many encouraging nods and ejaculations, and when the uneasy Eléonore from the next room called out that she would like to know the subject of the conversation, he bade her roughly to be quiet, and invited Sophia to proceed. That lady then touched upon the services which had been rendered to the Emperor by the troops of Hanover and Celle, and hinted at the probable raising of the Duchy to an Electorate, she did not say which duchy, but George William thought it was the Duchy of Celle,

whereas she had in her mind (and her surmise eventually proved correct) the accession of the Duchy of Hanover to this coveted dignity. She went on to say that sooner or later there would be an addition of territory in the shape of the Duchies of Bremen and Verden,¹ declared it would be a pity if a fine domain like Wilhelmsburg, Sophie Dorothea's inheritance, should be alienated from Brunswick-Lüneburg territory, and then by a natural sequence proceeded to show that all evils could be averted and all good things brought about by the marriage of her son George Louis with George William's daughter, Sophie Dorothea. George Louis she described in glowing terms; she alluded to his high favour with William of Orange, and his connexion, through her, with the Royal House of England, which assured him the good will of that great Power.

George William was completely carried away by the eloquence and arguments of his illustrious sister-in-law. No one, he told her, could regret more than he the breach between the two Houses, it was not his doing, and he was glad of an opportunity of reconciliation. He saw clearly the advantages that would follow upon the marriage proposed, and he promised his consent. It is probable that he did not need much persuasion, he only wanted the excuse of meeting the proposal half way which her visit gave him, for William of Orange's hints and Bernstorff's pleadings had already prepared the ground. With the warmest assurances of friendship he kissed Sophia's hand, and then escorted her to a suite of apartments to rest after her journey.

The anxious Eléonore, who by this time was up and dressed, was waiting for her husband on his return, and

¹ This did not actually take place until the reign of George II.

asked for an explanation of this unexpected visit. He gave it promptly, and added the unwelcome intelligence that he had consented to an alliance between George Louis and Sophie Dorothea. Eléonore was at first stunned by this blow to her hopes on the very morning of expected victory. The alliance she had laboured for years to bring about with the House of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was shattered to the dust, and the woman who had slighted and scorned her had only to propose an opposition scheme for it to be accepted. In vain she urged upon the Duke the insult such a *volte-face* would be to Duke Antony Ulrich and his son. George William answered testily that he had given nothing but a conditional promise. In vain she pointed out the hostility and self-seeking policy of the House of Hanover. George William said he was tired of family quarrels, and hailed this as a means of putting an end to them. He then proceeded to dilate upon the advantages of the union, and the advisability of Eléonore reconciling herself to the new state of affairs and burying the hatchet. But Eléonore, to her honour be it said, was unlike her husband in this—she was deaf to the voice of ambition where her heart was concerned. The failure of her cherished plans was bad enough, but it was as nothing compared with the wreck of her daughter's happiness. She threw herself on her knees before her husband, and implored him, with tears, not to sacrifice their only child, the one pledge of their love, to the promptings of policy and ambition, and doom her to the misery of a loveless marriage; she reminded him of the tales that had reached Celle of George Louis's sullen and profligate character, and of the hatred with which the House of Hanover had ever viewed her daughter and herself. It was like throwing their lamb to the wolves. But George William was obdurate:

he pooh-poohed all these things as idle fancies, and again told his wife to reconcile herself with the altered state of affairs, and, deaf to her entreaties, he bade her go and acquaint Sophie Dorothea with the plans he had made for her future. With a heavy heart the mother went to break the news to her daughter, a sad greeting for a birthday morning.

The young Princess had not been trained to control her emotions nor to having her will thwarted. The spoiled darling of her father's affections, she had hitherto only to wish for a thing and it was hers, and her wishes had been law at Celle. When, therefore, she was told it was proposed to hand her over to a man she had scarcely seen, and whom she had been taught to despise, without consulting her wishes in any way, she flew into a violent passion, and vowed she would have to be dragged to the altar before she consented. Her heart was free, for, though she was well disposed towards the young Prince of Wolfenbüttel, she had not yet learned to love him, and, though romance has it otherwise, there is no proof that the boy and girl love between herself and Königs-marck had made much impression upon her. But she was by no means favourably disposed towards George Louis. She had heard of his loutish manners and his loose morals. Her mother had taught her from her youth up to regard the Duchess Sophia and her son as her greatest enemies. She knew how they had insulted her mother and what degrading epithets they had applied to herself, and the news that she was about to be handed over to their tender mercies filled her with consternation and grief. After the first outburst her emotion found relief in tears, and she clung to her mother, and besought her to save her from such a fate. Poor Eléonore, who

was powerless, could only mingle her tears with her daughter's.

While this scene was being enacted in one wing of the Castle, in another the Duchess Sophia and George William sat down and despatched a hearty breakfast. Sophia, delighted with the success of her mission, spared no pains to make herself agreeable and to flatter George William to the top of his bent; she was also pleased to be gracious to Bernstorff, who had heard of the morning's work, and who, on his part, did everything he could to bolster up the Duke in his determination. A mounted messenger had already been despatched to carry the good news to Hanover, and to bid Duke Ernest Augustus and Prince George Louis come to Celle with all speed.

The breakfast was hardly over, the day had scarcely warmed, when the trumpeter on the tower announced the arrival of Duke Antony Ulrich and his son. They came with a numerous suite, ostensibly to offer their congratulations on the anniversary of the birthday of Sophie Dorothea, in reality to claim the fulfilment of her father's promise. The sight of the Duchess Sophia's coach in the courtyard and the Hanoverian liveries filled Antony Ulrich with suspicions which were only too speedily confirmed. The young Princess, he found, was too much perturbed to receive their congratulations in person, her mother was shut up with her; but the Duke of Celle, accompanied by the Duchess Sophia, received the Wolfenbüttel princes with much ceremony, and without ado proceeded to inform them of the news of the betrothal of Sophie Dorothea to George Louis, and by way of adding insult to injury invited them to remain to the birthday feast, when the betrothal would be announced. Duke Antony Ulrich, mastering his indignation with an effort, was so much insulted at this shame-

less right-about-face that, ignoring the invitation, he at once returned to his coach, accompanied by his son, and shook the dust of Celle off his feet. It is difficult to call such a retreat dignified, yet he seems to have made it so, though he left the Duchess Sophia in possession of the field.

George William, having got rid of his unwelcome guests, proceeded to the apartments of Sophie Dorothea on the troublesome errand of persuading his refractory daughter to put in an appearance and pay her respects to her aunt. He took with him a birthday present and a message of congratulation from the Duchess Sophia. The apartments of Sophie Dorothea consisted of three rooms leading from one another; the work-room or school-room, with two large windows overlooking the lime trees on to the moat, the parlour, somewhat elaborately decorated, and the sleeping-room, with the bed in an alcove, and a superb carved mantelpiece, supported by four cupids. These rooms Sophie Dorothea had occupied from her infancy, and her work and all her little treasures were scattered about. The Duke's resolution did not waver, though he found his daughter lying on the bed in a passion of grief, her mother by her side entreating her to be calm. Apparently her persuasions had not, so far, had much effect, for the temper with which Sophie Dorothea received her father may be gathered from the fact that when he gave her the Duchess Sophia's present, a miniature of George Louis set in diamonds, she threw it from her with such violence that it was shattered against the wall, and the precious stones fell all about the room.

Her father began to threaten and storm and reproach her mother for encouraging their daughter in this insubordination. Parental authority had its weight with even

the most self-willed young Princess in those days, and the result of the combination of her father's threats and her mother's entreaties was that Sophie Dorothea gradually became calmer, and was coaxed or forced into getting up and dressing herself, and consenting to be presented to her aunt Sophia in a proper manner. She had also to go through the ordeal of receiving the birthday congratulations of the Court and of appearing at the banquet, when her betrothal was announced; but her tear-stained eyes and downcast looks, no less than her mother's pallor and dejection, made it evident that she was acting under compulsion, and evoked the pity rather than the congratulations of the Court of Celle. Perhaps the Duchess Sophia found in the grief and tears of Eléonore and her daughter some consolation for the humiliation she underwent in thus recognising and meeting them for the first time as equals.

The next day Ernest Augustus and George Louis arrived from Hanover. Ernest Augustus was radiant, but George Louis was even more sullen than his wont. The beginning of the wooing was not promising. The young Princess fainted in her mother's arms when she was presented to her future husband. Her dislike was quite reciprocated by George Louis, who, though willing to go through the affair for the sake of the money, had been trained to have nothing but contempt for "Madame" of Celle and her daughter. His manners at the best were not prepossessing, and in this case he does not seem to have taken the trouble to make himself agreeable to his future bride. The elders did all the smiles and congratulations; the principals in the contract rendered nothing but an outward acquiescence, sulky on his side, and rebellious on hers.

Yet, looking at it from quite the outside point of view,

if George Louis had sought all over Europe he would hardly have found a more suitable match than this, and he certainly could not have found a more charming bride than his princess cousin. Sophie Dorothea had grown to great beauty. She was a brunette, with dark brown, almost black, hair, large velvety eyes, regular features, brilliant complexion, and the veriest little red rosebud of a mouth. Her figure was perfectly proportioned: she had an exquisite neck and bust, and slender little hands and feet. She had nothing in common with the large-waisted, flat-footed German princesses of the period; she favoured her mother, and, like her, was essentially "the Frenchwoman," not only in appearance, but in manners, dress, and conversation. She had the Frenchwoman's instinctive dislike to anything coarse or unrefined, and she excelled in all the accomplishments of the time; her dancing was perfect, she was a skilled musician, she was clever with her needle, and could express herself gracefully in writing. Her conversation was sprightly, she was full of wit and repartee, and her ready tongue, it may be feared, often led her into trouble. She had the Frenchwoman's emotional temperament, she was easily depressed and easily elated, and was capable of strong and unreasoning passion. But her instincts were always generous, and she was absolutely free from meanness in thought, word, or deed.

Such a disposition united to a good and wise husband might have been trained into a fine and noble nature. As it was, no man could have been found more unsuitable to her than George Louis; their temperaments were totally dissimilar, it was like the union of cold and heat, of ice and fire. George Louis had his good qualities, too, though somewhat latent, and a tactful and sympathetic wife might have developed them. Poor Sophie Dorothea

never even found them, much less developed them. How could she? She and George Louis were utterly unsympathetic, and when two antagonistic chemicals are mixed there is sure to be an explosion sooner or later. But the hearts and inclinations of the young couple were the last things the parents, except Eléonore, thought of in connexion with them.

George William was delighted to play the host again to his favourite brother and his respected sister-in-law. The betrothal was announced with much pomp. There were great feasts at Celle, and every one came to congratulate. All the neighbouring princes, with the exception of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, and all the great officers of both duchies, were delighted at the betrothal. Indeed, the advantages seemed many and obvious, and Eléonore, seeing how strongly the tide of popular feeling was against her, to say nothing of George William's obstinacy, had perforce to give way, hide her mortification as best she could, and counsel her daughter to submission to the will of her father. It was not an easy task, for Sophie Dorothea had a will and temper of her own, but she was brought to some show of outward complaisance, and induced to passively receive the congratulations of the Court and the unwilling wooing of her betrothed.

George William, Ernest Augustus, and Sophia agreed that, as there was no reason for delay, the marriage should be celebrated as soon as the necessary formalities and settlements were completed. Platen and Bernstorff were called in to help and advise, and lengthy deeds were drawn up. Eléonore seems to have been too heart-sick to interfere, or perhaps she was powerless, for in the marriage settlement Ernest Augustus and Sophia had everything their own way, and Sophie Dorothea's interests, apart from her husband and prospective children,

were scarcely studied. George William was in so complaisant a mood that the Duke and Duchess of Hanover could ask almost what they liked. He settled to give his daughter one hundred thousand thalers a year, which meant that he handed it all over to the exchequer of Hanover. The estates he had settled on her were also made over, except in the case of certain unlikely contingencies, such as the death of George Louis before his wife. If the Princess were left a widow, she was to be entitled to a dower of twelve thousand thalers a year. But the whole gist of the settlement was that the Princess, apart from her husband and her children, had no money of her own and no settlement in the modern sense of the term. Of course, she would be given enough to maintain herself in proper state as Princess of Hanover; but her money depended entirely on the good will of her husband and what her parents chose to give her from time to time; she had literally not a penny which she could call her own. Her position was much that of a married woman in England before the passing of the Married Woman's Property Act. The point is important in view of future contingencies.

One stipulation the Duchess Eléonore was able to enforce before the marriage contract was signed: George Louis's intrigue with Madame Busche was a matter of common notoriety, and she insisted that it should be broken off and the mistress sent away from Hanover. This very reasonable request was supposed to be very unreasonable, but Eléonore was firm. Sophie Dorothea had not yet notified her consent in writing, and people were beginning to comment on her downcast looks. The Duke of Celle did not wish it to appear that she was forced into an unwilling marriage, and to humour her and her mother it was promised that Madame Busche

should be sent away. The Duchess Sophia went back to Hanover to see the business carried through. In return for this concession Sophie Dorothea was induced to write the following letter to her aunt; it was merely a formal letter, probably dictated in substance and simply copied by her. Reading between the lines, we can see the mute protest that runs through it.

MADAME,

"I have so much respect for my lord the Duke your husband, and for my lord my own father, that in whatever manner they may act on my behalf I shall always be very content. Your Highness will do me, I know, the justice to believe that no one can be more sensible than I am of the many marks of your goodness. I will carefully endeavour all my life long to deserve the same, and to make it evident to Your Highness by my respect and very humble service that you could not choose as a daughter one who knows better than myself how to pay to you what is due. In which duty I shall feel very great pleasure, and also in showing you by my submission that I am,

"Madame,

"Your Highness's very humble

"And very obedient servant,

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA.

"At Celle, *October 21, 1682.*"

The Duchess Sophia probably found in this letter and in the tears and anguish of Eléonore and her daughter some compensation for the effort it cost her to have made the visit to Celle. Of her part in the betrothal she was probably ashamed, for we find her making no mention in her letters to the Duchess d'Orleans of her journey

to Celle, but concerning the marriage she wrote as follows:

"Ernest Augustus always had a queer head, and how such an idea could have entered it passes all my understanding. However, one hundred thousand thalers a year is a goodly sum to pocket, without speaking of a pretty wife, who will find a match in my son George Louis, the most pigheaded, stubborn boy who ever lived, and who has round his brains such a thick crust that I defy any man or woman ever to discover what is in them. He does not care much for the match itself, but one hundred thousand thalers a year have tempted him as they would have tempted anybody else."

The marriage contract was signed at Celle by Ernest Augustus and George Louis on the one part and George William and Sophie Dorothea on the other; thus the Princess was induced to sign away not only her liberty, but her fortune, and she became soul and body the property of George Louis. The Duchess Sophia came back from Hanover to be present at the wedding, which was hurried forward with all speed. Great preparations were made for it, and costly presents and congratulations poured in from all sides.

The wedding was celebrated in the private chapel of the Castle of Celle, according to the Lutheran rites, on November 21, 1682, with every circumstance of pomp and ceremony. The town was gaily decorated, the Castle was thronged with distinguished guests; there had never been such a wedding at Celle before. The beautiful little chapel, brilliantly illuminated and bedecked with flowers, presented a scene of unusual splendour. There were the bride's procession and the bridegroom's procession, and the procession of the parents, and the Court chroniclers exhausted themselves in describing the beauty

of the bride, the list of her jewels, the richness of her attire. The bridegroom was scarcely less bravely arrayed. Outwardly all was fair; but within, beneath this brave show, what horror, what anguish, what base and ignoble passions! There were the Duchess Sophia, exulting over the downfall of her enemies, yet with a spice of bitterness in her cup; her husband, the wily and covetous Ernest Augustus; the weak-minded George William; the sad and anxious mother, who could scarcely restrain her tears; the bridegroom muttering the unwilling words, while all the time his heart was with his banished mistress; the child bride, she was little more than a child, pale and unresponsive, sacrificed like another Iphigenia. The omens were unpropitious: there was no sunshine for the bride; the morning dawned dark and gloomy, and during the ceremony a furious storm broke over Celle, and the wind shrieked and raged, shaking the Castle walls. But dark and gloomy though the day was, it was not so dark and gloomy as the bride's heart; and fierce though the tempest, it was not half so fierce as the passions which raged in the breasts of the little group around the altar. There were priests and prayers and benedictions, all the pomp of heraldry and the pageantry of Courts; yet when all was stripped away this marriage was nothing but a shameless bargain, and a young girl's life was sold to a man steeped in selfishness and profligacy and who did not even make a pretext of loving her. When we are tempted to pass judgment on all that happened after, we must remember that the bride's vows were made half in ignorance, wholly under protest. The outward form was there, the words were spoken; but Love, who hallows the sacrament, was far away, and shuddering hid his holy face.

CHAPTER VI

THE COURT OF HANOVER

(1682—1684)

The Court's a golden but a fatal circle,
Upon whose magic skirts a thousand devils
In crystal forms sit tempting innocence,
And beckon early virtue from its centre.

LEE.

THERE were great rejoicings at Hanover in honour of the home-coming of the youthful pair. The marriage was exceedingly popular among all classes, and the people vied with the Court and nobility in celebrating an event which was to contribute so materially to the prosperity of the Duchy. George Louis and Sophie Dorothea entered Hanover in a State coach drawn by six cream-coloured horses and preceded by a military escort, and passed in procession through the decorated streets and shouting multitudes to the Alte Palais (the old palace), where they were to take up their abode. Sophie Dorothea's parting from the home of her childhood had been sad, but her welcome to Hanover was a warm one, and she forgot her sadness in the general rejoicing. Yet a shadow fell across the bride's path on the very threshold of her new home. Madame Busche, though under orders to quit, had not yet left Hanover, but had the audacity to appear with her sister, Madame Platen, at an upper window of the palace. Tradition says that as George Louis was helping his young wife to

alight, she looked up by chance, and saw this Jezebel at the window with her face convulsed with hate. Sophie Dorothea started and turned pale, she guessed instinctively who it was. The Duchess Sophia noticed her too, and was so angry her orders had been disregarded that she sent an imperative message to Madame Busche to leave Hanover that very night. Her mandate was obeyed; but the mischief had been done, and the *contre-temps* was an ill-omen for the success of the marriage.

There were loyal addresses and Court festivities, balls, plays, and feastings for a week on end in Hanover, and the bride won golden opinions by her beauty and grace. The events of the last few weeks had tamed her spirit, and she wore an air of timid dignity which, joined to her extreme youth, touched all hearts and even softened at first some of the dislike of her mother-in-law and some of the roughness of her husband. Ernest Augustus was much pleased with Sophie Dorothea, and stood between her and her enemies. Unlike his wife, he had no prejudice against his niece, and he never could resist a pretty face. Now that she had come to him as his daughter-in-law, filling his coffers with her dowry, and adding to the brightness of his court with her beauty, he was exceedingly well disposed towards her. With all his faults, Ernest Augustus was no tyrant, but on the whole a kind-hearted man, and throughout Sophie Dorothea's married life at Hanover he was perhaps her best friend, over-indulgent in some things, culpably lax in others, but without the malevolence of his wife or the cold brutality of his son.

To the girl bride, who had been reared under her parents' wing in quiet little Celle, and sheltered from the knowledge of evil, the Court of Hanover, with its meretricious gaiety and brilliance, its laxity of morals and

profligacy of manners, must have seemed like another world, and not a better one. The Hanover¹ to which Sophie Dorothea came could not boast of a magnificent Schloss like Celle, but it had three palaces instead of one. There was the Alte Palais, where the young Princess lived at first, an unpretending building in the centre of the town; across the street was the Leine Schloss, where also were apartments for the Royal Family, a larger and more imposing building, used for State functions and entertainments; and half-an-hour's drive outside Hanover lay the country residence of Herrenhausen, a favourite retreat of the Duchess Sophia, then a modest place, but which she later rebuilt, beautified, and enlarged. To this day Herrenhausen retains its charm. Its quaint, formal gardens with interminable hedges of clipped hornbeam, its colossal fountains and monstrous stucco cupids, its orangery, terraces, and ornamental water, make it unlike anything else in Europe. No wonder the Georges were so fond of it, no wonder they were eager to run away from gloomy London to the delights of this homely little Schloss, nestling in the midst of a great park and approached from the outer world by a long avenue of limes. When we have seen Herrenhausen we can understand the home-sickness of the earlier Georges, and their

¹ Hanover is still in some respects the same as it was in the time of Ernest Augustus and Sophia. Until the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, it must have been almost exactly the same; but the divorce from the English crown which then ensued made a difference, and the expulsion of the King of Hanover, in 1866, brought the town under Prussian rule, and resulted in the abolition of many landmarks. Under the iron heel of Prussia Hanover is losing many of its distinctive features. It has become much like any other modern Prussian city with wide streets, huge barracks, and enormous and hideous buildings, vast manufactories and breweries. The town has advanced in prosperity, but has lost in picturesqueness.

regret at leaving the cosy delights of their snug little Principality to take up the burden of the uneasy crown of England.

At the Court of Celle there was a comparatively modest retinue, few festivities, and little pomp of State. Hanover, modelled on Versailles, maintained a Court out of all proportion to the importance of the Duchy. The Duchess Sophia, who was a strict upholder of dignity, established in it rigid rules of place and precedence and no herald's table was ever classed more strictly than the different orders of the Court of Hanover. First and foremost, there was the Ducal family—the sacred clan, above, apart, and beyond all meaner mortals. In the second class came the Field-Marshal of the Army, all alone, a sort of buffer between their Serene Highnesses and their subjects. Then followed in the third class, in order meet, the civil and military authorities, the privy councillors and ministers, and generals of the army. The fourth class was made up of the High Chamberlain and the marshals of the Court, and so down to the pages, all of whom were noble. After this class there was a great gulf—the gulf between noble and simple; and then came in array a number of lesser Court officials, gentlemen ushers, physicians, musicians, every one in nicely graduated order, even down to the cooks, footmen, coachmen and grooms. The stables at Hanover were always a feature; they are so to-day, and must have been well worth seeing in Sophie Dorothea's time. They contained some six hundred horses and any number of splendid equipages.

Sophie Dorothea held a high place in all this state, and as Princess of Hanover (as she was formally styled) she was given a separate household. Her apartments were in a wing of the old palace; but she had her own estab-

lishment, her chamberlain, her ladies-in-waiting, and her pages. She seldom drove out except in an enormous gilt coach, with postillions and running footmen. We may picture her rumbling through the narrow streets of old Hanover of an afternoon, her pretty, childish, wistful face looking out of the window of the great coach, or driving outside the walls to pay her respects to her haughty mother-in-law at Herrenhausen.

The young Princess found it exceedingly hard at first to accommodate herself to all the formalities and restrictions incidental upon her rank at the Hanoverian Court. She never quite mastered all the minutiae of Court etiquette in which the Duchess Sophia revelled; she would forget, and in her childish, impulsive way, greet a member of the fourth class as though he were a member of the third, or *vice versa*. She followed her own likes and dislikes too much, she was too friendly with one and not friendly enough with the other, she would sometimes withdraw from the Court circle when she was bored, and did not always appear when she was wanted. All this greatly scandalised the Duchess Sophia, who considered Court etiquette the very essence of royalty, and she often wrote to the Duchess d'Orleans, complaining of the bad up-bringing of her daughter-in-law and the way in which her education had been neglected. Of course they both blamed "Madame" of Celle, who, being "a nobody," could not be expected to teach Sophie Dorothea the customs of a Court. Perhaps a little kindness and forbearance on the part of the Duchess Sophia might have taught the young Princess how to carry her dignity even to that female martinet's satisfaction, for she was very adaptive and quick to learn. But the Duchess Sophia showed her no sympathy, and her daughter-in-law's little slips were invariably made the occasion of some slighting

remark, either on herself or her mother. It is no wonder, under these circumstances, that Sophie Dorothea grew mutinous and careless, and even took a pleasure in showing her contempt for the rules of etiquette at the Hanoverian Court by wilfully transgressing them whenever she pleased.

The poor little Princess, in these first months of her married life at Hanover, surrounded by spies and enemies, must often have longed to flee from the hollow splendours of the Court to the home life at Celle and the arms of her loving mother. While all this importance was attached to the outward semblance, no one at Hanover heeded, and no one cared whether she was happy or not. It was hardly possible for her to have been happy. Sophie Dorothea was the victim of one of the cruellest of State marriages, and her only hope of happiness lay in the chance of some love and forbearance on the part of her husband. In these first months of marriage her nature was plastic to her husband's touch. A kind word might have wrought her to love, as a harsh one often drove her to tears and anger. With a little kindness, a little sympathy, all the miseries and mistakes of later years might have been averted, but George Louis had no kind words for the daughter of "Madame" of Celle, and even thus early in her married life she was neglected, insulted, and forced through experiences from which her girlish purity recoiled. Even if she had no claim on his affection, she might have had some on his pity. She was all alone and with none to help or advise her, for though Celle was only twenty miles away, the strained relations between the two Courts were not at this date so smoothed over as to admit of much visiting between them, and the means of communication were so bad that her father's principality seemed another country.

Sophie Dorothea had brought with her from Celle a trusted friend, if not a very wise one, in a young lady, Fräulein Eléonore von Knesebeck, who followed her to Hanover as confidential lady-in-waiting. She was a few years older than the Princess, and the daughter of one of the councillors at Celle, whose name appears as signing the marriage contract between Duke George William and Duchess Eléonore. She was a woman of considerable ability, and though no beauty, had a fair share of good looks. Her devotion to the Princess was beyond doubt, but her discretion, unfortunately, was doubtful indeed, and even in these early days she repeated to Sophie Dorothea many things that would have been better ignored, and incited her against her enemies.

We obtain a fairly good idea of the way in which Sophie Dorothea spent her day from her journals, or diaries, and if her record may be taken as a sample of the life of a German princess at the end of the seventeenth century, there was nothing very edifying or enlivening about it, even in so gay a Court as that of Hanover. The forenoon would be spent by the Princess either in bed (she was not an early riser) or in her apartments writing letters, or working with her needle. If the weather were fine, she might take a walk in the gardens of the Palace, unless it were a morning on which she "took her bath." In that case she kept her room most of the day for fear of a chill; but the bath does not seem to have occurred too frequently.¹ Sophie Dorothea would spend the greater part of the forenoon in dressing,

¹ The morning bath was not a daily institution at the end of the seventeenth century, even with princesses; for aught I know, it may not be in Germany to-day. Cleanliness was not a prominent virtue, and in the long list of servants at the Court of Hanover there appear to have been only two washerwomen employed!

or rather in being dressed—a lengthy operation, for she was fond of attiring herself. When this was over to her satisfaction, attended by her lady-in-waiting, and preceded by a page, she would go down in state to the substantial mid-day dinner, of which her mother has given so vivacious an account. Ernest Augustus would descend in state from his apartments, the Duchess Sophia from hers, with her daughter, Sophia Charlotte. The Prince of Hanover (as George Louis was styled) would arrive and the younger princes would also appear upon the scene, and, when all were assembled in the great hall, they would sit in order of rank, and the most rigid etiquette prevailed throughout. It must have been a funny sight, the bowing and curtseying, the devouring of great dishes of heavy food, the copious drinking of wine and beer. After the dinner was over, their Highnesses retired to their respective apartments, and very often (not unnaturally) Sophie Dorothea would return to bed for a period. When she arose, if the day were not too far gone, she would take an airing in her gilded coach, or pay some calls on ladies she wished to honour with a visit, or receive some visitors, never alone, always in the presence of her lady-in-waiting. By this time it was necessary to dress again for supper, often an occasion of great ceremony, when rich robes and costly jewels were donned. Again the Prince and Princess would repair to the great hall, and again meet the Duke and Duchess and members of the ducal family in order of rank. When supper was over, the great personages would join the general circle of the nobility, there might be music and conversation, but more likely they would play cards, ombre, and quadrille, and large sums would be lost and won, for play was high at Hanover in those days. Then the Duchess Sophia and the Princess would

retire to their apartments, and the company broke up. The next day, *da capo*. On occasions of importance, as for instance, the arrival of foreign princes or ambassadors at Hanover (and many arrived at that time, for there was much buying and selling of troops, and many intrigues), there would be more ceremony, larger banquets, balls and comedies and plays. But the above record forms a fair specimen of the average day at the Court of Hanover.

In this way the winter passed. The spring came, the lime trees and acacias flowered along the banks of the river Leine. The summer came and went. There were pastoral plays in the gardens of Herrenhausen, and masques, and visits of princes and princesses. But Sophie Dorothea gradually withdrew herself from the festivities, and with the autumn days there came good news to the Courts of Hanover and Celle. The Princess gave birth to a son and heir, who was born at Hanover on October 30, 1683, and who was destined forty-four years later to ascend the mighty throne of England.¹

The christening was celebrated with much rejoicing, and the infant was given the names of George Augustus, after his two grandfathers. The event naturally increased Sophie Dorothea's importance, and it set the seal upon the reconciliation of the Duchies of Hanover and Celle. Henceforward we find the Duke and Duchess of Celle visiting Hanover, and Ernest Augustus and sometimes George Louis, but rarely the Duchess Sophia, returning the visit at Celle, or staying with George William and his wife at their hunting-lodges of Göhre, Brockhausen, and Wienhausen. Sophie Dorothea also visited her parents frequently, and for long intervals.

¹George II. succeeded his father in 1727.

After the birth of the son and heir, the Duchess Sophia's manner towards her daughter-in-law seems to have altered for the better. She apparently determined to make the best of Sophie Dorothea, and though she never liked her, and had little in common with her, she dissembled her dislike, and treated her with outward courtesy. For good or evil, Sophie Dorothea was her son's wife, and the mother of the child on whom the accumulated dignities of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg would one day descend. It even seemed that the birth of the son might form a link between George Louis and his wife; such an event surely made for greater identity of interest between them, for a man, unless he be thoroughly bad, can hardly withhold some sympathy from the mother of his firstborn child, and George Louis was by no means wholly bad. He recognised the beauty and grace of his wife, and if they had been left to themselves, the young couple, despite their uncongenial temperaments, might have managed to rub along together fairly well.

But they were not left to themselves; an enemy was on the alert. Sophie Dorothea, by her amiability, had made herself generally popular in Hanover, and, as we have noted, she was especially viewed with favour by her uncle and father-in-law, Ernest Augustus. Her unaffected manners, her innocence and charm, contrasted with the craft and full-blown charms of Madame Platen, were like a cup of cold, pure water after a highly spiced draught; and Ernest Augustus found himself attracted more and more to the society of his daughter-in-law and away from the lures of his mistress. Madame Platen saw this and trembled. Vice always fears innocence, and when she noted the growing influence and importance of Sophie Dorothea, her envy and jealousy were

aroused. Yet she had no real cause of complaint. She had been largely responsible for bringing about the marriage, and she had been liberally rewarded for her share in the transaction, possibly by William of Orange, certainly by a commission on the substantial dowry; and in addition to these pecuniary rewards her husband had been raised to the rank of Baron. On the strength of these successes she had launched forth into a costly and extravagant style of living. Her residence at Monplaisir, conveniently situated half way between Hanover and Herrenhausen, was beautified and enlarged until it vied with the ducal palaces; her entertainments were of the most lavish description, her liveries and equipages rivalled those of the Princess of Hanover, while in dress and adornment she far outshone the Duchess Sophia. At Monplaisir she held a Court hardly second to that of the Duchess and attracted all the gay cavaliers and handsome young nobles of Hanover, who went to bask in the favour of the powerful mistress. High play, deep drinking, and general looseness of conduct were the rule at Monplaisir; no wonder the young bloods of Hanover found it so attractive!

The Duchess Sophia, true to her policy, steadily ignored all these extravagances on the part of Madame Platen, and continued to seek distraction in the consolations of philosophy and the society of Leibnitz and other learned men, whom, to her honour be it said, she invited to the Court of Hanover. Not so Sophie Dorothea, who was first astounded and then indignant at the impudent display of the Court mistress. Perhaps vanity had something to do with her indignation, for she objected to so many of the young nobles absenting themselves from her quiet little levées to pay their respects to Madame Platen. In youth and beauty the Princess far out-

shone the more mature Platen, and at the Court functions, splendidly dressed and brilliant with jewels, she was easily first and Madame Platen nowhere. Madame Platen had so long been the leading lady at the Court of Hanover, in fact if not in name, that she could ill brook a rival near her throne, and she had imagined, in her ignorance, that a mere girl like Sophie Dorothea would be amenable to her wishes. But the Princess, though young, and careless enough about etiquette in the ordinary way, was not disposed to abate any jot or tittle of the privileges of her rank and position in favour of Madame Platen, and quickly intimated to the woman that she must keep her place. Perhaps Sophie Dorothea would have done better to have imitated the policy of her august mother-in-law, and ignored the powerful mistress, but she was young and not altogether wise, and her heart was hot with indignant anger at the woman's arrogance and want of respect to herself. She expressed herself with considerable freedom on the subject, and her remarks, the reverse of complimentary, coming to Madame Platen's ears, incensed her the more against the airs and graces of "the interloper," as she called the Princess. Madame Platen was, in fact, hoisted with her own petard: she had helped to bring Sophie Dorothea to Hanover, only to find her arrayed against her.

When once Madame Platen's jealousy was aroused there were no lengths to which she was not ready to go. First she denounced Sophie Dorothea and her mother as upstarts who had no right to the titles they assumed, but this was old matter, and at the best came second-hand from the Duchess Sophia, therefore it did no harm; then she collected and retailed to Ernest Augustus all the ill-natured gossip she could gather about the Princess, but the Duke pooh-poohed it good-humoredly and would not

listen; he was quite ready to excuse his daughter-in-law any little indiscretions on the ground of her youth and good looks, and regarded all this tittle-tattle as mere feminine amenities. Madame Platen next sounded the Duchess Sophia, but that lady only smiled her inscrutable smile and pursued the even tenor of her way. Failing with the Duke and Duchess, she had recourse to the husband, and with George Louis she was more successful. Like most heavy and slow-witted young men, he was peculiarly sensitive to ridicule. Sophie Dorothea had a nimble wit and a thoughtless tongue, which were ever getting her into trouble, and she sometimes made fun of her husband and his boorish ways, letting fall remarks that had better have been left unsaid. These were retailed to Madame Platen by spies, and reported again by her to George Louis with much embroidery, thus inflaming his mind against his wife. Words followed between them. Neither was blessed with a very good temper, nor had much forbearance. From words they proceeded to open quarrels, which became more and more frequent, and the relations between the young couple were soon strained to the utmost. Madame Platen's next move was to recall her sister, Madame Busche, to Hanover, and throw her once more in the way of George Louis, but this missed its mark. Probably he was inconstant in his amours, and perhaps he had a new favourite; at any rate he refused to be fascinated again by the charms of Madame Busche. Meanwhile, his wife and he drifted more and more apart. By-and-by George Louis turned again to his first love—military service, and the next year or two found him far more in the camp than at the Court. The neglected Sophie Dorothea found consolation in her little son and in frequent visits to her parents at Celle, Brockhausen, and

elsewhere, and spent only a few months of the year under the same roof as her husband.

About this time (1684) there were great festivities at the Court of Hanover, for the Duchess Sophia's match-making proclivities bore fruit in the marriage of her only daughter, Sophia Charlotte, to the Elector of Brandenburg, who later became first King of Prussia. True, the Elector was eleven years older than his bride and a widower, but the Duchess Sophia, did not consider her daughter's inclinations in such a matter as her marriage, especially one so advantageous as this. Sophia Charlotte was the young lady of whom her mother said, when sounded on the subject, "that she was of no religion as yet," and by this marriage her faith was finally settled on the Protestant side. The Electress of Brandenburg seems to have justified this up-bringing, for she was a princess of extremely liberal and advanced views, a free thinker, and lax in her conduct. She had inherited her mother's abilities and also her contempt for Sophie Dorothea. There was never any love lost between them, so the Princess was glad when the Electress of Brandenburg took her departure from Hanover.

CHAPTER VII

THE POWER OF COUNTESS PLATEN

(1684—1688)

Trust not the treason of those smiling looks
Until ye have their guileful brains well tried,
For they are like unto the golden hooks
That from the foolish fish their baits do hide.

ED. SPENSER.

SHORTLY after the marriage of his daughter to the Elector of Brandenburg, the Duke of Hanover gave himself a holiday from the cares of State and made another journey to his beloved Italy, where he stayed this time nearly two years. He travelled with much magnificence and a large suite, including the indispensable Madame Platen—and her husband by way of keeping up appearances. Ernest Augustus made his head-quarters at Venice, where he maintained considerable state, which he was now well able to do with the aid of Sophie Dorothea's dowry. Madame Platen was the great lady of this miniature Court, and no doubt Ernest Augustus often regaled her with tales of the merry days which he and George William had spent in the city of the Doges. Brilliant festivities, some of which cost seven or eight thousand thalers, and a princely liberality, endeared him to the hearts of the nobility and people, and consoled the Venetians for the large subsidies they paid for the two thousand four hundred Hanoverian soldiers Ernest Augustus sold them by agreement in 1684. The Duke of

Hanover was shrewd even in his pleasures, and was always ready to do a good stroke of business when the opportunity came his way. He had not much to sell except his soldiers, but they were good fighting men, and fetched a high price in the market,—he sold them like cattle in herds, and squandered the blood-money on his Platens and extravagant living.

Meantime Ernest Augustus's lawful spouse, the Duchess Sophia, was left behind at Herrenhausen to carry on the government of the Duchy, and, what was more difficult, to keep in order the unruly cubs, her sons, who were now growing up to man's estate, and whose only point of resemblance was the hatred they bore to one another in general and their father in particular. They drank, gambled, and swore in the approved fashion of the time, squandered their substance in riotous living, and quarrelled and fought until Hanover became a beer-garden. The Duchess Sophia must have had great trouble with her unruly brood, and it is impossible to withhold pity from her, for she was fond of them. Prince Augustus ("Gustchen"), her second son, was the first to fall into disgrace. We find her writing: "Poor Gus is thrust out, and his father will give him no more keep. I laugh in the day and cry all night about it, for I am a fool with my children." Maternal love was indeed the soft side of the great Duchess's character. For the rest, she was no doubt glad to be rid of Ernest Augustus and Madame Platen for a while. The latter had made herself so aggressive of late, and raised so many breezes in her quarrels with Sophie Dorothea, that she must have ruffled even the Duchess's serene philosophy. Sophia, too, was greatly interested in affairs in England at this time. Her first cousin, Charles II., was recently dead, and his brother, James, II., had ascended

his uneasy throne. Sophia heard of Monmouth's ill-starred rebellion, of King James's unwise rule and the rising tide against Popery, of William of Orange's intrigues, and these things absorbed her to the exclusion of lesser annoyances. She paid little or no attention to her daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea, who, also forsaken by her husband, remained alone at Hanover; for George Louis had now marched to Hungary to make war on the Turks, with the soldiers ordered from Hanover and Celle to assist the Emperor. When the campaign came to a close, George Louis went to join his father at Venice without returning to Hanover.

Ernest Augustus then bethought himself of Sophie Dorothea, who was having a dull time of it at Hanover shut up with her stern mother-in-law. Ernest Augustus had a tender spot in his heart for his niece, and perhaps he had a twinge of conscience about spending all her money on Madame Platen without giving her any of the fun; perhaps, too, he thought it was time that she and her husband should come together again. They had not met for nearly a year, and had parted in anger. So he sent General von Ilten, who was in his suite, back to Hanover with instructions to escort the Princess to Venice. Sophie Dorothea was delighted with the prospect of the change; she packed up her prettiest dresses and jewels, and taking with her Madame von Ilten, the Mistress of the Robes, and Eléonore Knesebeck, her lady-in-waiting, she set forth at once. She arrived in Venice just before the carnival.

Sophie Dorothea was now in her nineteenth year, and every year seemed to add to her beauty. She had warm French blood in her veins, and her spirits rose to overflowing at this opportunity of seeing the world; it was her first experience of foreign life, and she threw herself

into the pleasures of the carnival with a zest that delighted her uncle and slightly shocked the prim Mistress of the Robes. Yet Sophie Dorothea's gaiety was innocent enough; it was merely the expression of a young girl's delight, and a rebound after having been shut up so long with her grim mother-in-law.

Ernest Augustus, whose taste for pleasure was somewhat dulled by time, was so pleased at the keenness with which his daughter-in-law enjoyed everything, and the praises he heard on all sides of her wit and beauty, that he decided to give her a further treat and take her to Rome for the Easter festivities. Madame von Ilten was unable to accompany the Princess, as her duties as Mistress of the Robes compelled her to return to the Duchess Sophia at Hanover, but Eléonore Knesebeck went in attendance. Prince George Louis did not travel to Rome with his wife, some trifling difficulty about a point of etiquette arose, he seized it as an excuse, and went to Naples instead.

While she was at Rome Sophie Dorothea met the Marquis de Lassaye, and about their short acquaintance much has been written which has no foundation in fact. Lassaye was a personage. He had served with distinction in the Imperial army against the Turks, and, when the campaign was over, journeyed to Italy like Prince George Louis; he may have travelled with him. He was a French nobleman, wealthy, and brilliant, and exceedingly given to amours and adventures. Burnet, in his edition of the *Correspondence of the Duchess d'Orleans*, writes of him: "The life of the Marquis de Lassaye was filled with adventures romantic enough to form the substance of a most improbable novel"; and the *Biographie Universelle* says he was "well known by reason of his birth, his wit, his marriages, his law suits,

but still more by an uninterrupted series of love affairs, which occupied the greater portion of an extremely lengthy career." This gay Lothario died in 1738, at the age of eighty-seven, without having experienced any misfortunes, or, as he happily expressed it, "without having unpacked his goods."

The fame of the Marquis de Lassaye was at its zenith when he threw himself across the path of Sophie Dorothea in Rome, and, if we may believe his word, for we have no other evidence, he promptly seized the opportunity to make love to her. Some fifty years later, before he ended his days in his castle of Lassaye, he made a collection of everything he had written, or was supposed to have written,¹ and had it privately printed by his own press in his castle. In this compilation he inserted thirteen love-letters, which he asserts that he wrote to Sophie Dorothea when she was in Italy; but none of them are dated, and all are the vague rubbish which in those days formed the stock-in-trade of gallantry. They are couched in extravagant expressions of devotion, but are singularly unconvincing. If we may believe his letters, there was a flirtation between the Princess and the Marquis, Eléonore Knesebeck, acting as a go-between; the affair was discovered, broken off, and the Princess admonished, and Lassaye forced to quit Rome. The let-

¹ This collection is called *Mémoires de Monsieur de Lassaye*. It bears also the better title of *Recueils de différentes choses*, for the parts of which it is composed are very varied and disconnected—love affairs, philosophy, ethics, satire, reflections on various matters, and letters, all jumbled up together. Lassaye had only a few copies of this collection printed for himself and a select circle of friends, so copies are extremely rare and cannot be bought. Herr Edward Bodemann managed to stumble across one in a second-hand book shop in Paris, and to him I am indebted for the perusal of the correspondence in the original French.

ters are not worth repeating in full, but the last one he alleges that he wrote to the Princess will serve as a specimen of the rest:

"I do not desire that you should run the risk of ruining yourself by keeping up relations with me: it is better for me to die and for you to live less unhappily. Stop, then, writing to a man who always brings misfortunes in his train, and whose fates are unpropitious. I have almost lost the habit of sleeping, and am scarcely able to support myself. Why have I been born with such a sensitive heart? Why was I destined to be always unhappy? Suffering seems to be my only lot in the world. Life is a burden to me, and in dying I should be able to secure your peace and happiness. Farewell, dear Princess; I can no longer bear the grief that overwhelms me."

That Lassaye ever sent these letters to the Princess, or even wrote them, is extremely improbable. The letters did not see the light until fifty years later, when the woman whom he slandered was dead, and unable to refute his accusations, and it is unlikely he made copies when he wrote them and kept them all that time. To what end? It would have been more to the point if he could have published the letters he alleges he received from Sophie Dorothea, but his audacity stopped short at the point of forgery. He was an exceedingly vain and garrulous person, fond of boasting of his conquests with the fair sex, and, if we may believe him, half the princesses of Europe had capitulated to his fascinations. The high rank, beauty, and romantic history of Sophie Dorothea made him desirous of adding her to his list, and he deliberately exaggerated a passing acquaintance to suit

his purpose. The truth seems to be this. Sophie Dorothea was flattered by the homage of the brilliant Frenchman. She may perhaps have coquetted with him a little after the fashion of the time—that is to say, she may have listened to his pretty speeches and laughed at his sallies. But when she saw he was likely to put a false construction upon her amiability, and take advantage of her good nature, she nipped the acquaintance in the bud and dismissed him abruptly. Lassaye, with all the pettiness of a small mind, cherished against the Princess a grudge for the blow she had inflicted upon his vanity and revenged himself by composing bogus letters.

After a few months in Italy, Sophie Dorothea returned to Hanover, and settled down again to her routine life. The following year (1686) she gave birth to a daughter, who was christened Sophie Dorothea, after her mother, and who, in years to come, married her cousin, the King of Prussia, and became mother of Frederick the Great.

It would seem that the birth of a daughter instead of a son was in some sense a disappointment to the Ducal Family of Hanover, though why poor Sophie Dorothea should be blamed it is not easy to see. The event certainly did not tend to increase her prestige, as the birth of George Augustus had done; and her husband, who was now home again, became more indifferent and colder than ever. In these two children, for she bore no more, Sophie Dorothea found all the happiness she experienced in her unhappy married life. Some of this unhappiness, it must be admitted, she deliberately provoked. Though she did not love her husband, she was furiously jealous of his amours with other women, and resented the presence of his favourites in proximity to herself. The little Hanoverian Court was a very hot-bed of intrigue, a nest of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and the

more we look into it the more we can understand the philosophic policy of the Duchess Sophia, who ignored and kept aloof from it all. No doubt she chose the better part, though it seems a somewhat unnatural one, for interference would have been useless, and by abstaining she preserved her dignity. Sophie Dorothea was different. At the outset she made an enemy of Madame Platen, met gibe with gibe and intrigue with intrigue. Of course she had the worst of the duel; it was like a fight between a hawk and a dove. She was no match for the older woman, who thwarted her at every turn, and grew daily in authority and arrogance. About this time Ernest Augustus advanced Platen to the title of Count, and his wife blossomed into a countess. Her power was now so great that even the stoutest of her foes feared to provoke her, and lesser obstacles were simply swept out of her path.

As an illustration may be quoted the case of the abigail Ilse. Court ladies in those days had often in their household an attendant who filled the middle distance between the servants and the mistress. Ilse occupied this ambiguous position with the Countess Platen, and a very hard time she must have had of it. She was young and fairly good-looking, and probably not too strict in her views of right and wrong. Duke Ernest Augustus was in the habit of consulting his Prime Minister's wife far more frequently than his Prime Minister, and whiled away many an hour in her congenial society at Monplaisir. As a rule he sent her notice of his intention of coming to see her, but one fine afternoon, as he drove back from Herrenhausen, he thought he would pay the Countess a surprise visit. He entered Monplaisir by the garden door unannounced. The Countess was absent, but under the trees was the abigail Ilse, whom Ernest

Augustus had never seen. The Duke could not resist the temptation of a few words with a young and pretty woman, and insisted that the abigail should not withdraw. Ilse remained, and was laughing and talking with the Duke, when suddenly the Countess Platen came upon them like a whirlwind. The Countess curbed her rage for the moment, and confined herself to an expression of astonishment that Ilse should have had the impertinence to thrust her company upon the august presence of His Highness. She bade the abigail begone, and then, no doubt, gave Ernest Augustus a piece of her mind on his lack of dignity and good taste.

Whatever may have taken place between these exalted personages, one thing is certain; Ilse was dismissed from Countess Platen's service with every mark of ignominy. Nor did her punishment end here. The following week Ernest Augustus went to Osnabrück, and the moment his back was turned the Countess Platen clapped the unfortunate abigail into the common gaol, or rather that part of it which was a sort of "spinning house." The fact that a woman without any trial should be dragged off to prison on a trumped-up charge shows how powerful Countess Platen was in Hanover; her word seems to have been as good as the Duke's sign manual. Ilse was kept in prison some time, and then "dry drummed" (a sort of seventeenth-century rough music) out of Hanover as a woman of loose character, dangerous to public morals. The girl found herself without the walls, friendless and penniless. In this plight she appealed to Ernest Augustus, but that volatile Prince had already forgotten her, or was afraid to arouse the ire of Countess Platen. He sent her a small present of money, and cynically counselled her to give Hanover a wide berth in future. Ilse then made her way to Celle, and laid her sad case

before the Duchess Eléonore, no doubt expatiating upon Countess Platen's enormities and her intrigues against Sophie Dorothea. The Duchess of Celle, after sifting the facts of the case, took Ilse into her employment, and found her an asylum in the castle. Countess Platen resented the Duchess's action as a personal insult to herself, and she was the more enraged against her and Sophie Dorothea. So the quarrel grew.

At the Court of Hanover, as we have seen, there were plots and counterplots; in addition to the women's squabbles, father was arrayed against son and son against father, and brother against brother. Among the unruly sons of Ernest Augustus, Sophie Dorothea had her friends, and the young princes for the most part hated Countess Platen quite as much as she did. Of them all, Maximilian was the most ungovernable, and had an unlimited capacity for getting into scrapes. Though well preserved, Countess Platen was by this time past her first youth, and she had recourse to divers means to heighten her charms, milk baths, artificial roses, and cosmetics. The rogue-pot, like dram-drinking, grows with habit, and the lady's cheeks became so ruddy that they were the byword of the Court. There was a quaint conceit that the water peas were boiled in was an infallible test of rogue, and the monkeyish Max, having a grudge against the Countess, procured a bottle of this decoction from the kitchen, and on the occasion of a Court ceremonial, when she appeared in full war paint, he squirted some in her face, with the result that she had to retire amid the suppressed titters of the assembly. The Countess, boiling with rage, complained to Ernest Augustus, and the offender was severely reprimanded and locked up in his room for many days. The punishment was not a heavy one, but it served to engender bad

blood between the father and son, and after he was liberated we find Maximilian intriguing with his two brothers, Augustus and Charles, against his eldest brother, George Louis, and his father.

Ernest Augustus's great desire was to add to the lustre of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. To this end he sought to unite the Duchies of Celle and Hanover, and he established primogeniture. He made his eldest son heir to all lands and territory, and only allotted to his other sons moderate sums of money whereby to support their dignity. This policy was the opposite to that pursued by his ancestors and by most of the German princes of his time, who in their wills were in the habit of dividing their territory among all their sons. It is no wonder, therefore, that the younger princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg disliked the innovation, protested noisily against it, and intrigued for its overthrow. The Duchess Sophia also disliked it. The disaffection was this time nipped in the bud by the vigilance of Countess Platen, who tried to implicate Sophie Dorothea in the plot, but nothing could be proved against her. It is possible that she had a hand in it, for the terms of her marriage settlement, which practically cut her off from inheriting territory, and left her at the mercy of her husband, were so unfavorable that she might be pardoned if she tried to alter them to her advantage.

These things did not tend to improve Sophie Dorothea's position at the Court of Hanover. Her best friend, Ernest Augustus, suspected her of intriguing against him, and George Louis disliked her the more because he thought she wished to upset the marriage settlement; except Eléonore Knessebeck, she had not a friend to whom she could turn. It is hard to imagine a more difficult position, but her cup of suffering was not yet full.

Mention has been made of the unsuccessful efforts of Countess Platen to enamour George Louis again with her sister, Madame Busche, who had now returned to Hanover a widow. It was the policy of Countess Platen to widen the breach between George Louis and Sophie Dorothea by every possible means, and, knowing the young Princess's jealous disposition, she felt that the most efficacious way to prevent a reconciliation would be to engage the Prince in another intrigue. Madame Busche having ceased to charm, she must find some one else. The lady whom she chose as a decoy was Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg,¹ the daughter of an illustrious and noble house, who might have been capable of better things. But Ermengarda Melusina, not being over endowed with this world's goods, was anxious to settle herself, honourably, if she could, dishonourably if no other chance offered, according to the custom of the time. The young lady had only recently arrived at Hanover, and had stayed at Monplaisir. Countess Platen took her up, presented her at Court, and established her there as a lady-in-waiting. Ermengarda Melusina seemed of a docile and confiding disposition, and Countess Platen thought she would find in her a willing tool; but though she made no pretensions to wit, and was slow of speech, she was shrewd, more shrewd than her chaperone gave her credit. In appearance she was the opposite to Sophie Dorothea; her features were of the heavy German type, and she was of gigantic height (the Duchess Sophia called her "the tall Malkin"); but, *en revanche*, she was only nineteen, had good features, large blue eyes, fair hair, and a fine figure. The Countess introduced her to George Louis on his return from

¹ Many years later Duchess of Kendal.

Hungary. As he was short himself, he admired tall women, and was much struck by Ermengarda Melusina's large and placid charms, and began to pay her marked attention. He was seen with her everywhere, riding with her in the hunting-field, seated next to her at the play, and leading her out at the dance. His wife was openly neglected for this new rival.

To do Ermengarda Melusina justice, she was not spiteful nor aggressive, nor desirous in any way to injure Sophie Dorothea. At first she hung back from the glittering prospect before her, but being very poor, and, as subsequent history proves, very avaricious, she did not hold out long, and then surrendered at discretion.

About this time the Countess Platen consoled Madame Busche for the loss of her power over the Crown Prince by marrying her in second wedlock to General Weyke, who must indeed have been a bold man, for Busche had only been dead a few months, and it was well known that his death had been accelerated by his wife's extravagance, bad temper, and misconduct. Probably Weyke was induced to marry the widow on the strength of promises of promotion.

Countess Platen resolved to make her sister's nuptials the occasion of proclaiming, more or less informally, George Louis's infatuation for Schulenburg, and with a refinement of cruelty she tried to induce Sophie Dorothea to be present. Though Sophie Dorothea always treated Countess Platen with coldness, that lady maintained the semblance of respect for the rank, if not the person, of the Princess, and she waited upon her to invite her to the wedding festivities, and in the course of the interview dropped many hints and veiled taunts wrapped up in the cloak of flattery. Sophie Dorothea had the good sense to keep her temper. She declined the invitation on the

plea of ill-health, but said that she would send Eléonore Knesebeck to represent her. The wedding was celebrated with much splendour at General Weyke's country residence a few miles from Hanover. After the ceremony there was a banquet, and dancing followed in the evening. The Prince of Hanover honoured the occasion with his presence, and so did his brothers, who, though they hated Countess Platen, were ready to go anywhere to enjoy themselves; but neither the Duchess Sophia nor the Princess was present. Eléonore Knesebeck was there to represent the latter. The great personages at the feast, far eclipsing the bride and bridegroom, were Ermengarda Melusina, decked in jewels, and her lover, George Louis, who paid her so much attention that every one noticed it, and, when he lead her forth to the dance, General Weyke and his bride had to take a second place at their own festivities. When Knesebeck returned to the palace she found Sophie Dorothea waiting up for her in great agitation; nor was she content until she had had a recital of the whole affair, and learned that she was openly flouted in the capital of the Duchy.

From this time George Louis's amour with Ermen-garda Melusina assumed a recognised phase. She was sumptuously lodged, and he visited her daily, and spent most of his time with her. In this he was only imitating his father, and, when all was said and done, Schulenburg was much less offensive than Platen. Unlike her mother-in-law, Sophie Dorothea writhed and raged under her husband's infidelity, but she could obtain no redress. The Duchess Sophia, true to her policy, declined to interfere, and to appeal to Ernest Augustus was useless; in her despair she turned to Celle, and made complaint to her parents. From her mother, who was helpless, she got both love and sympathy; from her father she got

neither. A change had come over the spirit of George William's dream, for Bernsdorff had plied him with many tales to the detriment of his wife and daughter. So he bade Sophie Dorothea to keep her place, imitate the example of her estimable mother-in-law, and ignore such trifles, and he further exhorted her to be more amenable to her husband, and not to give way to temper. Thus repulsed in the quarter where she looked for help, the unhappy Princess knew not where to turn; she was friendless and alone, unguided and unaided, ready to seize at any means of avenging her wounded pride. At this juncture her evil genius came upon the scene in the person of Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck.

CHAPTER VIII

ENTER KÖNIGSMARCK

(1688—1689)

. . . he seemed the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall.

TENNYSON.

COUNT PHILIP CHRISTOPHER KÖNIGSMARCK had led an adventurous life since the day when, a handsome youth, he parted from the Princess at Celle, ten years before. He had grown to man's estate, travelled far and wide, been through dare-devil adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and distinguished himself for audacity in many adventures and gallantry in many Courts. He came to Hanover with the reputation of being a brilliant, dashing young nobleman, a reputation which his wealth and personal beauty did much to heighten.

Count Philip Christopher Königsmarck was the second son of a Swedish nobleman, the famous General Count Königsmarck, who was killed at the siege of Bonne in 1673, leaving behind him two sons and two daughters. Of the elder son more anon. The elder daughter, Amalie Wilhelmina, had married Count Lewenhaupt; the younger, Marie Aurora, was still unwed, and was distinguished through Europe for her grace and beauty. She was then in her first youth; her subsequent adventures

at the Courts of Dresden, Sweden, and elsewhere would fill volumes.¹

The family of Königsmarck was a curious product of the seventeenth century, and, to judge them correctly, one must weigh them by the standards of their time: they were wealthy, endowed with great beauty, and of noble birth, and, had they been so minded, could have lived and died in their native land honoured and respected by all. But the spirit of adventure was in their blood. The brothers were military adventurers, and the sisters Court favourites, to use no harsher word, and they each and all of them were conspicuous figures at the most brilliant Courts of Europe. Most of the beautiful adventuresses of this period were the daughters of poor noblemen. But the Countesses Königsmarck could not plead poverty for embarking on their glittering and eventful careers: with them, as with their brothers, the incentives must have been the spirit of restlessness pure and simple, the passion for display, and the love of notoriety, which through all ages have been powerful attractions to men and women of their temperament.

The elder brother, Count Carl John Königsmarck, began his travels when quite a boy. He accompanied his uncle, the celebrated Count Otho William, sometime Field-Marshal of France, and afterwards Governor of Swedish Pomerania, on a tour through the greater part of Europe. He visited England in 1674. Soon after we find him figuring at the Court of Versailles. Later he joined an expedition of the Knights of Malta against the Turks, when he nearly cut short his promising career by tumbling into the sea; but he was dragged out half

¹ They have done so: Palmblad's *Aurora Königsmarck*, published in Swedish and German, Leipsig, 1852, gives a full account of her adventurous career in six volumes.

drowned, for the Königsmarck family, like cats, appeared to have nine lives. Later we find him at Rome, Venice, and Genoa, and then proceeding through Portugal to Spain. At the Court of Madrid he was an honoured guest, and figured with great *éclat* at the festivities consequent on the marriage of the King. During these festivities he took part in a bull-fight, wherein he distinguished himself by his quickness and courage, and again met with an accident which nearly cost him his life. He was badly gored by a bull, but, bleeding and wounded, continued to fight until he was carried fainting out of the arena. The Spanish ladies were delighted with his pluck, and unanimously declared him to be one of the most gallant cavaliers that had ever visited the Court of Madrid. After these experiences he returned to Sweden for a time.

He found there Philip Christopher, his younger brother, who had returned to the family nest from the Court of Celle, where his presence was no longer welcome. It was resolved to send him to England to complete his education, and Carl John, who had been in England before, undertook the charge of his young brother. The two brothers sailed from Gothenburg, in 1681, and, after a rough voyage, landed at Hull. Count Carl John presented himself at the Court of Charles II., bearing with him a letter of introduction from the King of Sweden. The fame of his exploits had travelled before him, and the merry monarch cordially welcomed so distinguished a gallant, and appears to have taken a great liking to him. Carl John at once plunged into the gaities of the dissipated English Court. His younger brother, Philip Christopher, was lodged in London, and sent to attend Foubert's Academy in the Haymarket, a celebrated school of arms in that day. A man named

Hanson was engaged to act as his tutor and watch over his morals in the gay metropolis, and, in the intervals of his military training at Foubert's, to prepare him for entering the University of Oxford.

The rank and fortune of these distinguished youths and the favour of the Court naturally gave them access to the great houses of England, and we find them on terms of intimacy with the highest of the nobility. This was especially true of the elder brother, who became a general favourite, and won the favour of many of the Court beauties. But the Swedish noble sought more substantial advantages. Through the Dowager Countess of Northumberland he became acquainted with her young daughter, the Countess of Ogle, who was one of the great heiresses of the day. This lady was by birth Lady Elizabeth Percy, orphan daughter and heiress of the eleventh Earl of Northumberland. She was married to Henry Cavendish, Earl of Ogle, son of the Duke of Newcastle, when only eleven years old, according to the evil practice of giving heiresses in wedlock when mere children; but, because she was so young, she never lived with her husband. He died after his marriage year, leaving his countess the bulk of his fortune, and a greater prize than ever. The unfortunate child appeared in widow's weeds at the Court of Charles II., and was known as *La triste héritière*. She had few pretensions to beauty, and suffered from the fact that her hair was bright red, which in those days was not admired, so she was given the additional nickname of "the Countess Carrots."

Count Carl John Königsmarck resolved to win this prize, and paid his court to her assiduously. Despite her precocious training, Lady Ogle was too young to know her own mind; but she seems to have been attracted to

her Swedish suitor favourably, and would probably have yielded to his pleading had not her family discouraged his suit. Count Carl John came with the strongest credentials, and the King's favour to boot, but the Dowager-Countess of Northumberland, who shared the prevalent prejudice against foreigners, sternly refused to hear a word in his favour, and shut the door in his face.

Incensed at his unceremonious rejection, the Count turned his back on England for a time. The spirit of military adventure being strong within him, he attached himself to an expedition against the Moors, and fought at Tangiers with great bravery. The war was of short duration, and a peace having been patched up with the Moors, the restless Count next joined a cruise against the Algerines. While he was thus engaged, news came which determined him to return to England without delay. Though rejected by Lady Ogle's guardians, he had by no means given up the idea of winning her, and hoped by distinguishing himself in the wars to strengthen his suit; she was still so young that they could afford to wait a while, and doubtless he felt that his doughty deeds would make her heart grow fonder. Whether they did so or not mattered little, for her heart was the last thing that Lady Ogle's guardians took into consideration; they felt the care of the child heiress a great responsibility, and resolved to settle her safely as soon as possible. Therefore, in Count Carl John's absence, they married her privately, much against her will, to a country gentleman, Mr. Thomas Thynne, of Longleat, in Wiltshire, commonly called "Tom of Ten Thousand" from his wealth, ten thousand a year in those days being considered an immense fortune. The match was a suitable one as regards money and position, but in other respects it was disastrous. Thynne was a young man of debauched

habits, a notorious *rouè*, whom Dryden lampooned as Issachar in his *Absalom and Ahithophel*. This marriage, like the previous one, was never consummated. The pair separated immediately the ceremony was concluded, and the young bride fled to Holland to escape from her second husband. She was then only fourteen years old!

Count Carl John took upon himself the *rôle* of champion of the distressed damsel; he considered that he had been tricked and the lady betrayed, and by some crooked piece of reasoning he persuaded himself that if he could only get Thynne out of the way he would secure the heiress and the fortune for himself. Full of this intent he arrived in London early in 1682, accompanied by a Captain Vratz, a dare-devil fellow who had followed him in all his campaigns, and was absolutely devoted to his interests. This time the Count did not present himself at Court, but took private lodgings and remained hidden, on account, he afterwards said, of some skin disease he had picked up in Morocco which made him unfit to appear in public. He saw no one but his younger brother, Philip Christopher, who was still pursuing his studies at Foubert's Academy, and Vratz. It is impossible to say what dark schemes were hatched in Carl John's lodgings, but we know for certain that Vratz, who was a noted duellist, tried to fasten a quarrel upon Thynne, but that gentleman declined his challenge and refused to meet him. Vratz was determined to encompass his destruction, and, since he could not kill him in what was known as an "honourable way," he hired two swashbucklers, Lieutenant Stern, a needy rogue, and Borosky, a Pole, who had come from Sweden with horses for Count Carl John, to act as his seconds or confederates, and again endeavoured to provoke his adversary. But Thynne

obstinately refused to come out, and, failing in his endeavour to murder him legally, Vratz determined to dispatch him in some other way. It chanced in this wise. One afternoon, just when the dusk was falling, Thynne was driving in Pall Mall with his boon companion, the Duke of Monmouth. He put the Duke down at his lodging, and drove on, but his coach had not proceeded more than a few yards when it was stopped by three mounted men, one of whom, Vratz, seized the horses, another, Stern, knocked down the postillion, and the third, Borosky, thrust a blunderbuss in at the coach window and discharged it at Thynne. The three desperadoes then made off, leaving their victim so dangerously wounded that he died in a few hours. There was a great hue and cry. The position and wealth of the murdered man, and the fact that such a deed had been committed openly in a frequented thoroughfare like Pall Mall, was too much even for those times. The law was invoked at once, and the three assassins were captured and thrown into gaol to await their trial. Count Carl John was arrested as an accessory before the fact. He denied that he had any knowledge of the murder, but arms were found at his lodgings; it was proved that he had made inquiries as to Thynne's whereabouts, and it was even hinted that the young lady, anxious to be rid of her obnoxious husband, secretly encouraged him. There does not seem to be any proof of this slander. Lady Ogle (or Elizabeth Thynne) was a girl, and absent abroad; that she may have wished to be rid of her husband is likely, and, under the circumstances, natural, but it is impossible to believe that she connived at his murder.

The trial took place in February, 1682, and was one of the most celebrated trials of the reign, equalling in interest, if not importance, the notorious Popish plots. The

whole town was in a ferment, and, for days nothing else was talked about. The murdered man had many friends of influence and position, who were determined to bring his assassins to the gallows, and popular opinion was with them. On the other hand, the King's influence was known to be in favour of Count Carl John, he had come to him with an introduction from the King of Sweden, and he was unwilling that so distinguished an ornament of Courts and so brave a soldier should end his days by means of the common hangman. Among the witnesses for the defence was Philip Christopher's tutor, from whose evidence may be gleaned many particulars of the younger brother's sojourn in England: for instance, that he had been sick of the ague, that he had been on visits to certain of the nobility, that he was about to leave Foubert's Academy and go to Oxford, and lastly, that he, a distinguished foreigner, had been brought to England to be instructed in the Protestant religion and a proper knowledge of our free and enlightened institutions,—this point was supposed to carry great weight with the jury. Young Philip Christopher also gave evidence in his brother's defence. The judge could not understand why Borosky had come over from Sweden. Philip Christopher said that his brother had sent for him because he was a great judge of horses, and he wished to buy some, not only for himself, but for him. "My lord," said he, "I had a bill of exchange." "For how much money, my lord?" inquired the Lord Chief Justice Pemberton. "For a thousand pistoles to buy horses, and he has bought one horse and wants to buy more." This testimony, preposterous though it may seem, carried weight with the Lord Chief Justice, who evidently had a hint from the King. In his summing up he greatly favoured Count Carl John Königsmark, and the result was

a verdict of "Guilty" against the three desperadoes, but "Not Guilty" against Carl John. The Count thus escaped by the skin of his teeth; and, when he heard the verdict, there was a scene in court, for the acquitted man had the audacity to exclaim, "God bless the King and his honourable Bench!" whereat followed great uproar.

The three accomplices were hanged in chains. Count Carl John, though he saved his neck, ruined his reputation in England. The tide of feeling was strongly against him. The King plainly told him that he could do no more, and the coldness of the Court, the hostility of the nobility, and the threats of the populace combined to make him quit England for ever. He repaired to the Court of Versailles, where his recent experiences rather added to his reputation than otherwise. While there he had the audacity to renew his suit to Lady Olga (or Elizabeth Thynne), now widowed for the second time, but she would have nothing more to do with him. She probably felt, and rightly, that to marry such a man would be to implicate herself in his crime. She went into mourning for her husband—or, rather, "did not appear public," as the phrase went—for some six or seven weeks; she then returned to England, and married Charles Seymour, third Duke of Somerset, and added her colossal fortune to his. The marriage was on the whole a happy one, and she and the Duke were important and powerful personages at the Court of Queen Anne.¹

¹ The Duchess of Somerset's character was above reproach. She was one of the most virtuous matrons at the Courts of William and Mary and of Anne; but party feeling ran high in England, and Swift's bitter pen tried to make her out an assassin at the age of fourteen—that is to say, he endeavored to implicate her in the mur-

Count Carl John returned to his estates in Sweden, but he could not brook the quiet of country life, and soon plunged again into the dangerous delights of war. War in those days was a game at which emperors, kings, and military adventurers played for a pastime, the soldiers being the pawns in the game. Carl John was wounded at the siege of Cambray; he then followed his regiment to Spain, and distinguished himself at the siege of Verona. The last stage of his eventful career was when, in 1686, he went with his uncle, Otho William, to the Morea; he took part in divers sieges and battles, and so exerted himself that he brought on an attack of pleurisy, of which he died.¹

Though Count Philip Christopher Königsmarck (now, by the death of his brother, Count Königsmarck,) had nothing to do with the murder of Thynne, yet this untoward event influenced his fortunes not a little. The name of Königsmarck had become so odious in England

der of Thomas Thynne. He thus attacked her in a series of preposterous puns, which he addressed as an ode to Queen Anne:

England, dear England, if I understand,
Beware of *carrots* from Northumberland.
Carrots sown thin (Thynne) a deeper root may get
If so be they are in summer set (Somerset).
They cunning's mark (Königsmarck) thou, for I have been told
They assassine when young, and poison when old.
Root out those carrots, O thou whose name
Spelled backward and forward is always the same!

This was Anne, who sometimes wrote her name "Anna," and the allusion to "carrots" referred to the red hair of the Duchess of Somerset.

¹ We have dwelt thus on the career of Count Carl John Königsmarck because Horace Walpole and other chroniclers have fallen into the error of confounding him with his younger brother, Philip Christopher; and Horace Walpole even goes so far as to describe Philip Christopher in his *Reminiscences of the Court of George II.*, as the murderer of Thynne, which he certainly was not.

after this affair that, despite the young Count's admitted innocence, the Court could not be brought to look upon him with favour, and so he abandoned the idea of going to Oxford and left England for France. He was at Versailles some time; he then travelled through France and other countries. This was a period of peace in the history of Europe; the great war which was concluded by the treaty of Ryswick was not begun until some years later (1689), and so there was no opening for Königsmarck's military talents. It is not easy to follow his career during this period, but on leaving France he seems to have gone to the Court of Dresden, and proceeded with his military studies, and while there to have formed a friendship with Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony (Augustus the Strong), and to have accompanied him on his travels in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. We know that he was in Venice, and probably other parts of Italy, about this time, and we find him figuring in his own letters as carrying on a *liaison* with a beautiful Italian lady connected with literature.¹

From 1682 (the date of the famous trial) to 1688 Königsmarck's career is involved in uncertainty. One thing, however, is certain, that he appeared in Hanover on March 12, 1688. This we learn from the records of the Hanoverian Marshal von Malortie.² Herein it is stated that Königsmarck was present at an entertainment given by the Prince and Princess of Hanover on the occasion of some public festival. Before this date there is no mention of his name in any contemporary records of Hanover, and after this it occurs frequently; we are therefore justified in supposing that Königsmarck

¹ Vide Cramer's *Memoirs of the Countess Aurora Königsmarck*.

² Published in Hanover, 1847, under the title of *Der Hannöversche Hof*.

did not appear at Hanover before 1688. The point is important, more important than appears at first sight, because it has been stated that Königsmarck was in Hanover at an earlier date than 1688, and formed an intimacy with Sophie Dorothea before the birth of her daughter, thereby casting doubts on the legitimacy of her daughter, afterwards Queen of Prussia, and so upon the Imperial House of Germany. But there is no proof whatever (everything points the other way) that Königsmarck was in Hanover before 1688, two years *after* the birth of the Princess.

We may take it, there being no evidence to the contrary, that Königsmarck's appearance at the Prince's festival was synonymous with his arrival at the Court of Hanover and on this occasion he first met the Princess, Sophie Dorothea, again, after ten years. Many changes had taken place. When they had parted she was little more than a child, and it can hardly be supposed that their youthful intimacy had left any deep impression on her mind.¹ With Königsmarck it seems to have been different. If we may believe his asseverations later, he loved the Princess as a child, and never ceased to love her all his life long, even when his cause seemed most hopeless. On this occasion—their first meeting after

¹ The fact that Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck were children together is proved by a reference to the printed report of the judicial inquiry with regard to Fräulein von Knesebeck, tried before the Vice-Chancellor Hugo and Count Platen. In pages 76-86 appear these questions:

"How long is it that the Count and Princess have loved each other?" The answer was: "They have loved each other from childhood. The Countess Rens (? Reuss) has related to me that when they were yet children they loved." "How old were they then?" "Nine or ten years." "And they always loved each other?" "Yes, that was always so, and thus he came to this Court to serve."

many years—there was no hint of his feelings; he paid his homage to the Princess of Hanover with the formal respect due to her rank, though he probably recalled to her the days they had spent together at Celle. She greeted him with pleasure as an old friend and an acquisition to the Court circle, and in this latter view she was supported by Ernest Augustus, who was always glad to welcome distinguished strangers to Hanover, especially when they had money.

Witty and accomplished, and withal generous and given to hospitality, Königsmarck soon became one of the most popular gallants about the Court. He did not omit, like all the young nobles, to pay his respects to the powerful Countess Platen at Monplaisir, and she, on her part, was much impressed with his handsome person and dashing manners. The fact that Countess Platen was attracted to Königsmarck would not render him more agreeable to the eyes of Sophie Dorothea, and it may be doubted whether in that year (1688) the Princess saw much of him, though he was at Hanover for some time.

Ill-treated and rebuffed on all sides, Sophie Dorothea's troubles had begun to tell upon her health; the Prince neglected her more and more for Schulenburg, often not coming near her for weeks at a time. Sophie Dorothea felt this slight keenly, and one day visited her husband in his apartments and demanded an explanation of his coldness and neglect. Was it due to any fault on her part? she asked pitifully, because if so she would endeavour to regulate her conduct to his wishes. But George Louis would not give her any explanation, and ordered her out of the room. Sophie Dorothea's temper was never much under control, and she lost it altogether at this rude rebuff. High words ensued between the unhappy pair; they had a more violent quarrel than ever

before, and it was said that George Louis used personal violence to expel her from his presence. When at last the Princess returned to her apartments her agitation was so great that it brought on a nervous prostration, and some say a miscarriage. For some time she was confined to her bed, and so ill that the Duchess Sophia, who generally held aloof and ignored her, interposed on behalf of the neglected wife. The Duchess Sophia did not view the Schulenburg affair with any favour, and reprimanded her son so severely that George Louis was forced for a time to pay his wife some attention—that is to say, he would come and sit by her bedside for a few minutes, and sullenly inquire after her health.

When Sophie Dorothea rallied a little, the Duchess Sophia took her off to Herrenhausen with her children, and paid her every care and attention: this at least must be noted to her credit. It was probably during this period that the Duchess gave her daughter-in-law those long lectures on English history which Poellnitz describes with such unconscious humour.¹ They lasted hours at a stretch, and poor Sophie Dorothea had to listen to the end, though often tired and bored, for she had not the same interest in English affairs as her mother-in-law. Sometimes she seems to have dropped a hint to this effect, for we find the Duchess Sophia rebuking her want of interest, and telling her it was necessary that she should know the history of a country over which she might one day be called to reign as Queen Consort, and, if so, she trusted she would do her duty. This provoked Sophie Dorothea's retort that if ever she were Queen of England she hoped she would have more sense than to

¹ *Histoire Secrete de la Duchesse d'Hanover Épouse de Georges Premier*, etc., said to be written by the Baron von Poellnitz. Published in French, London, 1732.

run away and leave the crown as King James had done; for the flight of King James and the accession of William and Mary had just then astonished Europe, and were events especially agitating the mind of King James's first cousin, Sophia, whose sympathies at this period were secretly with the exiled monarch and his family, notwithstanding the ties of self-interest.¹

After a time some sort of wretched truce was patched up between the ill-mated couple, probably through the mediation of the Duchess Sophia, and Sophie Dorothea returned to her apartments in the Old Palace and to outward union with her husband.

Königsmarck had then left Hanover for a period. The death of his uncle, Count Otho William, in the latter part of 1688, called him to Italy, and in the February of the following year we find him attending the splendid obsequies of that distinguished relative at Venice, for Count Otho William was not buried until many months after he died. By his brother's death Königsmarck had become a rich man; by his uncle's death he became one of the wealthiest noblemen in Europe, and the splendour of his equipages, the lavishness of his entertainments, and his reputation for gallantry made him an acquisition to any Court. He was one of Fortune's favourites: born in the purple, entering upon a large inheritance while yet a young man, he had the opportunity of making the most of the good gifts Fortune showered upon him. Every Court in Europe was open to him; there were many capital cities where he might have found a fitting scene for the spending of his wealth and the display of his peculiar talents, but Hanover, little Hanover, drew him back again—wherefore who shall say? He had no

¹ In King William's chest was found a large bundle marked "The Electress Sophia's correspondence with St. Germain's."

ties there of long standing, no attractions equal to those of Versailles and Dresden, no friends, unless it were the Princess whom he had known in boyhood, and who was now in a position which should have debarred intimacy. Whether it was chance or a set plan, whether it was destiny or the desire of the moth for the flame, whatever it was, Königsmarck returned to Hanover, and from that moment Sophie Dorothea's good angel deserted her.

CHAPTER IX

PLAYING WITH FIRE

(1689)

Yet this joy, waited on by fear and doubt,
Plucked casually as by a flower of accident,
On the rough lip and edge of danger's breach,
How sweeter is it than the rose to smell
We gather from our garden with gloved hands,
And find nor thorn, nor perfume!

SWINBURNE.

ON his return to Hanover Königsmarck set up a sumptuous establishment. He took a house not far from the ducal Palace, in a street that was then one of the principal in Hanover, but which is now one of the few bits of the old town remaining. His beautiful sister, the Countess Aurora, came to stay with him, and his married sister and her husband, Count Lewenhaupt, paid him frequent visits. In addition to his lands in Sweden, Königsmarck purchased a large estate near Hamburg, and frequently travelled there from Hanover. Some idea of his establishment may be gathered from the fact that his secretary, Hildebrand, mentions on one occasion that Königsmarck was attended by a retinue of twenty-nine servants and fifty-two horses and mules. Where money was concerned Königsmarck was absolutely reckless; his love of pleasure and display amounted to a passion, and the result was, notwithstanding his large fortune, he was often in need of ready

money, and had to raise it at ruinous interest. At present his fortunes showed no shadow of embarrassment. Hanover was dazzled by the advent of this wealthy foreigner; the splendour of his retinue, the magnificence of his entertainments, and the beauty of his sisters were on every tongue. His fortune was magnified tenfold, and indeed it seemed inexhaustible. At Court, at the chase, at the opera, in the ballroom, at the carnival, Königsmarck carried all before him; he was the central and brilliant figure.

Duke Ernest Augustus marked his appreciation of the wealthy foreigner by appointing him a colonel of his Hanoverian Guards. As the troops of the ducal brothers were allied in accordance with the treaty of 1676,¹ he was sometimes with his regiment at Hanover, and sometimes at Celle, though he was more particularly in the service of Hanover. The post gave him free access to the palace, and was considered one of the most honourable about the Court, elevating its holder to what was known as the Third Degree. Though highly ornamental, it was no sinecure; the pay was not large, and in Königsmarck's

¹ A doubt has been raised as to whether Königsmarck was ever in the army of Brunswick-Lüneburg at all, in consequence of the trouble which was taken subsequently to erase his name from all official documents of Hanover and Celle relating to the troops. But the doubt is settled by the auditor of his regiment, named Radiger, in his evidence in the Secret Senate Chamber of Hanover on July 27, 1694. Radiger states he had served in a regiment of foot-guards commanded by Königsmarck in Flanders. He had also served in a regiment of dragoons in which Königsmarck held the same rank. This document may be found in the Archives of Saxony, Royal Courts of Justice, Dresden. The correspondence of Colt, sometime English envoy at Hanover, also (as we shall shortly show) contains reference to Königsmarck as holding a commission in the Hanoverian troop. This correspondence is in the State Paper Office, London.

case it may have been honorary to avoid jealousy at the promotion of a foreigner. And there was plenty to do. The air of Hanover was full of the noise of military preparations, and the prospect of active service was especially attractive to Königsmarck. It was probably one of his objects in taking the colonelcy of the Guards; for though his pleasure-loving soul delighted in the glitter of Courts, the camp had its charms for him too. He was a daring and a skilful soldier, an expert in the profession of arms, and many kings would have been glad of his services.

Königsmarck struck up a friendship with the young Princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, notably with Prince Charles, the favourite son of the Duchess Sophia; and later he was very friendly with Prince Ernest, the youngest of them all, who was many years his junior. Königsmarck was about the same age as the eldest Prince, George Louis, and some six years older than the Princess Sophie Dorothea, who was at this time in her twenty-fourth year. His intimacy with Prince Charles, who was a great friend of Sophie Dorothea, threw him frequently in her society. The memory of their early friendship helped matters considerably. He and the Princess had many things in common; they both possessed a love of things beautiful, and their tastes were artistic and refined. This refinement showed itself in Königsmarck's dress, equipages, and entertainments. His love of display never degenerated into vulgarity, he could boast of all the superficial accomplishments, his manners and address were graceful, and on things in general he was remarkably well informed. In other ways Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck were curiously alike. Both possessed highly strung and mercurial temperaments. Both were extravagant (Sophie Dorothea's expenditure formed

the subject of many a lecture from her husband). Both loved amusement, fine clothes, lavish entertainment, balls, plays, dances, and continual excitement. Both were impulsive, emotional, imprudent, and thoughtlessly generous. Sophie Dorothea was much beloved by the poor in Hanover and Celle for her kind heart, which was always ready to respond to the cry of suffering and distress. Her indiscriminate almsgiving was another grievance against her. It can easily be imagined how these two persons contrasted with the cold, sluggish natures around them, and the stiff routine of the German Court. If we bear in mind all the forces at work, and the surrounding circumstances, the trend of subsequent events seems to have been almost inevitable.

The Princess was very unhappy, and welcomed Königs-marck as a friend. He was not backward in assuring her of his respect and devotion; his society was pleasant to her, and his evident homage flattered her vanity. But at this time there certainly was not, in the conduct of Sophie Dorothea, anything which would warrant the impression that a deeper feeling than friendship existed. In a Court of many intrigues their friendship simply meant that Königs-marck ranged himself with the adherents of the Princess. Her health was not good, and she spent many hours in retirement with her children. Königs-marck and Prince Charles would come to see her, and amuse her by telling her the gossip of the Court. The Princess never saw any one alone, but always in the presence of her lady-in-waiting, and the pages were in waiting in the ante-chamber. There was no impropriety in Königs-marck's visits, and none was at first imagined; but it was playing with fire, for in course of time the Princess began to speak to her friend of her husband's ill-treatment and neglect. His conduct was open and

notorious, so there was no concealment in the matter; but though perhaps natural, it was very imprudent for her to take Königsmarck into her confidence—it is a commonplace that a handsome young man is about the worst counsellor an ill-used wife can find. Königsmarck, of course, sympathised deeply, and expressed his indignation in no measured terms (what man would not?), but his championship did more harm than good. He seems to have had at this time some idea of provoking George Louis to fight a duel with him, and so rid Sophie Dorothea of an unsympathetic husband. It is related that on one occasion, when Königsmarck was holding forth before a large company on the superior splendour and attractions of the Court of Dresden, Prince George Louis sarcastically asked him why he ever left it. Königsmarck retorted: "Because I could not bear to see a prince destroy the life and happiness of his good and beautiful wife by neglecting her for an impudent and worthless mistress!" The company gasped at the audacity of the answer, for though it was true of the Elector of Saxony it had a double application, but cold and sullen George Louis ignored the affront for the time being, though he never forgot it nor forgave it.

Königsmarck made his appearance at the Court of Hanover at a critical time in the fortunes of the Duchy. Duke Ernest Augustus might well be excused overlooking domestic squabbles in the face of the wider politics which were confronting him. The peace of Europe was trembling in the balance. The great European Coalition was forming against Louis XIV., and the Duke of Hanover was temporising as to whether he would cast in his lot with the French King or with the Allies. On the surface there does not seem to have been any ground for his hesitation; the ties of religion, of blood, of race, of

honour, would naturally bind him to the Coalition. But these things were nothing to Ernest Augustus in comparison with the promptings of self-interest, and he determined to sell his support to the highest bidder.

The dispute between the French King and the Emperor Leopold had reached an acute phase. On the death of the Elector Palatine Louis XIV. had successfully invaded the Palatinate; but his position was uncertain at the close of 1688, and, urged by the infamous counsel of Louvois, he determined to devastate that fair province. Villages were burned, churches wrecked, and thousands of families turned out of their homes and suffered to perish from cold and hunger. The beautiful Castle of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg and the fair town of Mannheim were reduced to ruins. The wanton spoliation and sacrilege, the cruelties and barbarities committed by the French army aroused the indignation of Europe. It seems incredible that Ernest Augustus, considering how closely he was connected with the Palatinate through his marriage,¹ could have hesitated for one moment on which side to throw in his lot. But he hesitated.

The crusade against the French King was almost a Holy War. Louis's only ally in Europe was the Sultan of Turkey, whom he assisted against the House of Austria, and whose Moslem cruelties to Christians were rivalled by this "Most Christian" King in the atrocities which his army committed in the Palatinate. All Europe cried for vengeance. The Emperor Leopold, Catholic though he was, made common cause with the Protestant William of Orange, now King of England. The King of Spain followed suit, and the German princes, both Catholic and Protestant, one by one allied themselves

¹ The Duchess Sophia was the daughter of one Elector Palatine (the "Winter King" of Bohemia) and the sister of another.

against the King of France. The Grand Monarque had no one left in his side but the Sultan, and the exiled King James II. of England, whose reproaches from St. Germain to their Catholic Majesties of Austria and Spain for allying themselves with "that Protestant usurper and enemy of Holy Church, William, Prince of Orange," were without avail. The King of France had proved himself a standing menace to the liberties of Europe, and in the common effort to check his aggression all minor differences gave way. Though the Emperor Leopold at first took the lead, William of Orange was the heart and soul of the European Coalition against Louis. It was largely the result of his skilful negotiations; and many times when it was at the point of breaking up, his statesmanship held it together.

In the face of so powerful a European combination as this it would seem that the action of a petty State like Hanover mattered little. To the Emperor Leopold it mattered a good deal; it was not merely a question of Hanover only, but of Hanover and Celle, for the troops of the ducal brothers were allied, and they had shown their mettle in many a hard-fought campaign. Besides, if Hanover and Celle, so nearly allied to the Palatinate, stood aloof, other little states might do the same, and the unity of the German confederation would be broken. To William of Orange it mattered something, too, for the House of Hanover was nearly allied to the Stuarts, and if it made common cause with the protector of the exiled King James, his influence in England would be sensibly weakened.

Ernest Augustus, wily old fox that he was, estimated the advances of these powerful potentates at their true value. They wished for his support; he was willing to sell it, but at a high figure. His spouse, the estimable

Sophia, also took a hand in the game. Each had a coveted desire. The price Ernest Augustus demanded of the Emperor was the Electoral dignity; Sophia asked of William III. a clearer recognition of her claim to the succession to the Throne of England. The Emperor demurred. There were then Eight Electors in the German Empire: two Protestant, Saxony and Brandenburg; three Roman Catholic, Bohemia, Bavaria, and the Palatinate; and three spiritual, the prince archbishops of Metz, Treves, and Cologne. The Emperor had no constitutional power to add to their number, though he might do so by a stretch of prerogative. Besides, if such an Elector were elected, or rather created, the elder branch of the House of Brunswick—Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel—had prior claim. But Ernest Augustus remained firm. He even began negotiations with Versailles, and Sophia, no whit behind her spouse in intrigue, opened up a correspondence with St. Germain. These tactics were successful; both the Emperor and William III. came to terms. The Emperor promised the dignity of Elector to the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, but under heavy stipulations. The Dukes of Hanover and Celle bound themselves to support the Emperor against the French King and also against the Turks in Morea, and to pay annually five hundred thousand thalers; to furnish a force of nine thousand men, and to uphold the Hapsburg dynasty in its dynastic disputes. The Emperor held back the formal bestowal of the coveted honour till a more convenient season, but he made a binding promise. King William III. promised to advance the Duchess Sophia's chances of succession to the English throne when he could, and (what was far more important to Ernest Augustus) to use his influence for the House of

Hanover with the Emperor. Thus did Hanover join the confederation against France.

These matters settled, events moved rapidly throughout the winter of 1688 and spring of 1689. Hanover resounded with military preparations, and there was a continual coming and going of ministers and envoys, for the Allies hostile to France were in constant communication with one another. The manifesto of the German confederation was published in February, that of the States General in March, that of Brandenburg in April, and that of Spain in May. England followed suit in the same month, and the great war between the Allied Powers and France was declared, which did not end until the Peace of Ryswick 1697.

Meanwhile another event, more directly bearing on the fortunes of the House of Hanover, took place in England. The Act of Settlement was passed by Parliament, and though this Act did not specify the Duchess Sophia and her heirs by name it expressly excluded any Roman Catholic prince from ascending the throne, and vested the crown in the Protestant succession. William and Mary were childless, Anne was in feeble health (the Duke of Gloucester, her short-lived son, was not yet born), and so it seemed in the course of nature that, if the Protestant succession were upheld, the crown must ultimately devolve on Sophia or her children as the Protestant descendants of the Stuarts in the line of succession. William also intimated, that, when occasion served, he would do more in the matter.

The Duchess Sophia received the news with the liveliest feelings of joy, and even Ernest Augustus was not insensible to the importance which accrued thereby to the House of Hanover. Prince George Louis remained unmoved; he had not forgotten his unsuccessful mission

to England seven years before. Prince Max, always in opposition, avowed himself an ardent Jacobite; the other young princes probably did not trouble about the matter at all. In default of a more sympathetic audience, therefore, the Duchess Sophia turned again to her daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea, and expatiated on the brilliant possibilities before her. Poor Sophie Dorothea, who was ill and unhappy, proved even more indifferent than her husband; the prospect of the English crown was much too vague to allure her, and England was little more than a name. The Duchess Sophia had again occasion to remonstrate with her daughter-in-law on her lack of interest in a matter which affected not herself only, but her children.

By way of emphasising the importance of the Act of Settlement, William appointed Sir William Dutton Colt to be Envoy Extraordinary to the Princes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Brunswick-Lüneburg. Colt was charged with the mission of representing England at the Courts of Hanover, Celle, and Brunswick, and of keeping their respective princes well disposed towards the great Alliance. No easy task, it must be admitted; for all the princes pulled different ways, and the perpetual journeys from Hanover to Celle, and Celle to Brunswick, to say nothing of following the Duke of Celle in his ceaseless movements to Brockhausen, Wienhausen, and Göhre, would have worn out any but a strong man. As it was, we soon find Colt complaining of the "perpetual motion" of the Court of Celle.

The new envoy arrived at Celle in July, 1689. He was received by the Duke and Duchess "with all y^e respect and ceremony imaginable," but his first impressions of Celle were indifferent. "The town," he writes, "is very poor, and all y^e country round nothing but a deep sand

and wood of small fyr trees, full of all sorts of wild beasts, which with the Duke's passion for hunting makes him reside constantly here and at some little houses he has in y^e neighbourhood. I fear to pass a very miserable winter here, in extreame cold and very ill houses."¹ But Hanover cheered his spirits. "This place," he writes, "has much more the appearance of a Court, and the town much larger and finer, people laying out their money in building and furnishing their houses, besides abundance of strangers resorting constantly hither."² And again: "Nothing can be happier than we are here, all the Court and the ministers showing us all imaginable kindness."³ His secretary, De la Roque, was even more enthusiastic. "Yesterday," he writes, "Sir William Colt had an audience with the Duke and Duchess and Princess of Hanover [Sophie Dorothea], who received him with every mark of respect due to him as His Majesty's envoy. This Court is as splendid as any in Germany; genius and civility reign here. The Duchess Sophia is une personne incomparable d'un esprit, d'une bonté, et d'une civilité à charmer. She speaks all living languages as well as her own. Her beautiful daughter [in law], the Princess, is both accomplished and agreeable."⁴

Soon after this the Duke and Duchess of Celle paid a visit to the Court of Hanover. The two brothers had much to talk about in connexion with the part they were to play in the great war and the intrigues for the Electorate. It is more than probable the Duke of Celle thought at this time that, as he was the elder brother, the Emperor would confer the Electoral dignity on him,

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, July 19, 1689.

² *Ibid.*, Hanover, July 26, 1689.

³ *Ibid.*, Hanover, July 30, 1689.

⁴ *Letter of De la Roque*, July 26, 1689.

and he was such a fool that the cunning Ernest Augustus, with the aid of his unscrupulous tools Bernstorff and Platen, could hoodwink him as much as he pleased. He seemed to be rapidly losing any will of his own, and he became more and more the pawn of his ambitious and scheming brother. Proportionately as the Hanoverian influence waxed, that of the Duchess Eléonore waned, and she had now no voice in affairs of State and comparatively little in matters of a purely domestic nature. The Celle-Wolfenbüttel combination had long ago fallen to pieces, and George William's dislike of Antony Ulrich was not far short of Ernest Augustus' hatred of the same prince. Between the Courts of Brunswick and Hanover there existed the most intense jealousy. The records of the time reveal a network of intrigue, bribery, treachery, and falsehood between these petty German Courts which has seldom been equalled and never surpassed; the restricted area and the pettiness of the disputes added intensity to the bitterness.

The Duchess Eléonore was not a very welcome guest at Hanover; but the Duchess Sophia had by this time sufficiently masked her animosity to receive her with civility, and, indeed, on account of their grandchildren, little George Augustus and Sophie Dorothea, common sense told the older people that it would be well to dissemble their dislikes, and there was nothing to be gained by perpetual strife. It had no such lesson for the Prince and Princess of Hanover, whose mutual dislike seemed to increase as time went on; and though Duchess Eléonore had abundant love and sympathy for her unhappy daughter, we find her henceforth preaching prudence and patience to her, and urging her, for her children's sake, to make the best of her lot.

There were many festivities at Hanover in honour of

the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Celle, and among them the Prince and Princess of Hanover gave a ball to which the Court and nobility were invited. Everything was done on a scale of magnificence. Duke Ernest Augustus and the Duchess Sophia with a numerous suite attended in state, and sat on a raised dais with their honoured guests. The Duchess Eléonore must have felt that at last she was a duchess indeed, especially if she contrasted these flattering attentions from her haughty kinsfolk with their former snubbings and insults. The evening began with a play—probably a pastoral with dances; then there was a procession to the banqueting-hall, and after supper Sophie Dorothea opened the ball with her father the Duke of Celle. The Duchess Sophia and the Duchess Eléonore did not dance, but sat apart on the dais. Duke Ernest Augustus was too stout, so George Louis led out the Countess Platen, as *vis-à-vis*, she being the greatest lady present after their Serene Highnesses, and it is recorded that the splendour of her jewels and attire far outshone those of the Ducal party. When the first set dance was over, the dancing became more general, and Königsmarck and the Princess stood up for a minuet. Königsmarck wore a suit of pink and silver, while the Princess appeared as Flora, all in white, with no jewels and a wreath of natural flowers. They made so handsome a couple, and withal danced so exquisitely, that they called forth the admiration of the whole company. Indeed, the Countess Platen was so struck by the grace of Königsmarck's dancing and the beauty of his person that when the dance was over, she went up and complimented him in most extravagant terms before the whole assembly, to which Königsmarck, who was nothing if not gallant, replied in a fitting manner. The incident did not fail to attract the notice of

the Court, except that of Ernest Augustus, who seemed blind and deaf where his favourite was concerned.

From this hour Königsmarck's intimacy with the Countess Platen ripened rapidly—an intimacy which may be palliated, but certainly cannot be excused. He became a frequent visitor to Monplaisir, where drinking was deep and play was high. The Countess was always willing to win a little money from her admirers (it was the recognised way of buying her favours), and before long rumour spread the tale that an intrigue existed between the two. It is difficult to say what was the truth of the matter. The Countess Platen must at this time have been about forty years of age, but she was at the height of her opulent charms;¹ she had power, wealth, and the art of making herself pleasant and fascinating to men, and she was not troubled with any scruples. Königsmarck was neither better nor worse than other young nobles of his day, and the probability is that Poellnitz's narrative is in the main true, and in an unguarded moment Königsmarck threw over his good intentions and discretion.²

¹ Thackeray calls her a "hideous old Court lady"; on what authority I know not. She certainly was not old at that time, and far from hideous. There is a picture of her at Herrenhausen in a rich crimson robe, a fine, voluptuous-looking woman, with black hair and an ample bust, just the sort of woman one would expect her to be. Curiously enough the picture hangs immediately beneath that of Königsmarck.

Thackeray also says of Königsmarck that "a greater scamp does not walk the history of the seventeenth century"; but there is nothing to show that Königsmarck was any greater scamp than his contemporaries; in many things—notably in his bravery, his generosity, and, later, his fidelity to a great love passion—he was better than most of them.

² Poellnitz asserts that on receiving the Countess Platen's compliments on his dancing at the ball, "Königsmarck comprit tout le sens

Königsmarck was soon smitten with remorse. He could not ignore the fact that his intimacy with the bitterest enemy of the Princess must look very much like treachery in Sophie Dorothea's eyes, and he sought an audience to make excuses to her for his conduct, declaring, not very ingenuously, that it was necessary to win the favour of the Countess if he were to be of any real service to the Princess. The Princess answered coldly that it was a matter of indifference to her how he spent his time, or with whom, and he was wise to pay his court to the mistress, as she could prove a much more powerful and influential friend than she (the Princess) could ever be. Indeed, she went on bitterly, she had no friends; she was betrayed and deserted on every side. Only recently she had craved leave to return with her father and mother to Celle for a time, but, through the interference of Countess Platen, Ernest Augustus had refused permission, and she must needs remain in Hanover surrounded by enemies. She burst into tears, and Königsmarck, smitten by self-reproach, became scarcely less agitated, and vowed with great fervour his respectful homage and lifelong fidelity to her interests. Just at

de ces paroles, et la passion qu'il avoit pour la Princesse ne le rendit pas insensible aux avances d'une aussi belle personne que la Comtesse. Il lui répondit qu'il étoit confus des bontez qu'elle vouloit bien avoir pour lui qui le méritoit si peu, et que puisqu'elle lui permettoit de l'aller trouver le soir. . . . Königsmarck fut chez la Comtesse, qu'il trouva en deshabillé sur un lit de repos. Elle se leva et ayant laissé toute modestie, elle courut l'embrasser, en lui avouant sa foiblesse et lui faisant voir tant de charmes, que Königsmarck ne se fit point scrupule de répondre à sa tendresse. Le jour étoit prêt à paroître quand il se retira chez lui. Il se jeta sur son lit pour y prendre quelque repos, mais ce fut en vain, et il se reprochoit continuellement d'avoir été sensible aux charmes de l'ennemie déclarée de la Princesse."—*Histoire Secrète de la Duchess d'Hanover*, pp. 80—81.

this point Prince Charles came in to pay his respects to Sophie Dorothea, and, finding both his sister-in-law and Königsmarck violently agitated with an emotion they were unable to conceal, his suspicions were aroused. He was a well-wisher of both, and, though he said nothing to the Princess, when the visit was over he took Königsmarck aside, and warned him that the path he was treading was a dangerous one, and it behoved him to walk more warily.

Königsmarck thought so too. His passion for the Princess was growing daily, and threatened to outstep all bounds of discretion. He was not wholly selfish; he loved her with all the love he was capable of feeling, and he began to see that his presence, so far from serving her cause, was likely only to increase her difficulties. His brief-lived intrigue with Countess Platen filled him with disgust and remorse; he was at his wits' end to repel her advances with civility, and there were the elements of danger in it, too, for should Ernest Augustus suspect anything, his career at Hanover would be closed for all time. The only way out of the dilemma was a temporary absence.

The opportunity soon came. In accordance with his treaty with the Emperor Leopold, Ernest Augustus, who this summer had sent troops to Flanders, and his eldest son, George Louis, to the Rhine, was also sending, in the autumn of 1689, some regiments of his famous Hanoverians to the Morea, to fight with the Imperial forces against the Turks, and Prince Charles, Königsmarck's bosom friend, was to accompany them. What more natural than that Königsmarck should volunteer to go too, especially when the Duchess Sophia made an appeal to his friendship and entreated him not to suffer her best-loved son to face the perils and dangers of this

far-away campaign alone? He at once craved permission to serve with the Hanoverian troops in the campaign, and it was granted. Dearly as he loved military adventure, he did not go without sadness and misgiving. It was hard for him to tear himself away from the object of his passion; and as the day of departure drew near his depression was noticeable to the whole Court, and the more inexplicable because he had come to Hanover with the reputation of being a brave and keen soldier. The Countess Platen remonstrated with him on his decision; she had no wish to lose so amiable a gallant. He told her coldly but civilly that his determination was unalterable, and doubtless in his absence she would forget him. With the Princess his leave-taking was more difficult. Unaware of the depth of the feelings he entertained for her, and seeing in him nothing but a sincere and devoted friend, Sophie Dorothea did not hesitate to express her regret that he was leaving her at a time of great stress and difficulty, when she had most need of his counsel and advice. She besought him to take care of himself and return quickly, for she saw before her a time of sore tribulation when she would need to the utmost all her friends. Königsmarck was so moved by these gracious words that he had great difficulty in restraining his emotion; as it was, he contented himself with vowing again his devotion and fidelity to her interests, and bade her adieu.

The rigours of an early winter had set in, the snow was lying on the plains around Hanover, when Königsmarck and Prince Charles set forth for the Morea.

CHAPTER X

THE EMBROIDERED GLOVE

(1690—1691)

They two alone one summer day:

“Ah Love,” she said, “is hard to lose.”

“And harder still,” he said, “to say

The bitter words that you must choose

Between the lover of to-day

And the true friend of yesterday.”

LADY ARABELLA ROMILLY.

THE winter was one of the most rigorous known for years, and brought much hardship and suffering to the troops fighting in the Morea and privation and want to the people at home. The Hanoverian subjects groaned under the weight of the large and increasing military burden imposed on them. Taxes were high and discontent was general.¹ But, though soldiers might die and peasants perish of cold and starvation, the Court of Hanover was as gay and extravagant as ever. Countess Platen kept open house at her palace of Monplaisir; her jewels and dresses grew more and more resplendent; her hazard table was the focus of all the dissolute young nobles about the Court. The opera was thronged nightly. Thousands of thalers were squandered on feasting and music and dancing, though the Duchy was involved in a bloody and unprofitable war and its troops

¹ “Every prince here keeps more troops than he can possibly maintain.”—Colt’s *Despatch*, Hanover correspondence, December 4, 1689.

were being mowed down like grass by the scimitars of the Moslem hordes.

The New Year opened with much festivity. "This family is here together," writes Colt, "except the Duke of Celle and his Court. We have had a Carnival and a most magnificent Opera of voyces from Venice, which has drawn much Company hither."¹ And again: "Our opera is most magnificent fine, exceeding even that of Italy."² But there was a spectre at the revels which would not be shut out. "I am under dreadful apprehensions," he continues, "that our mirth will not end well, being concerned for the safety of Prince Charles, the fourth son of this Duke, who is marching from Prestina. If he be killed it will bring both the Duke and the Duchess with sorrow to their graves; nor, indeed, have I ever seen one more generally beloved." Poor Sophie Dorothea was probably under "dreadful apprehensions," too, not only for the safety of her favourite brother-in-law, who had always taken her part, but for the man whom she deemed her faithful friend and devoted adherent; if she lost them she would be friendless indeed. But however much her heart might ache, it behoved her to smile and to deck herself in jewels and brave attire, and take her place in the festivities of the Court by the Duchess Sophia's side, who had sorrow and anxiety too.

A few weeks later, and the evil forebodings were realised. News came that the young Prince, the flower of his race, the darling of his mother's heart, the idol of the Court, was lost in the Morea. There were many contradictory reports: some said he was slain, others that he was only wounded, others that he was taken prisoner and carried to Constantinople. Then followed a month

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 24, 1690.

² *Ibid.*, January 28, 1690.

of wearing anxiety; the Duchess Sophia broke down under it utterly, and the Electress of Brandenburg came to comfort her mother. It was supposed, too, that Königsmarck was killed or taken prisoner. At last the suspense ended. "We have received certain news," writes Colt, "that Prince Charles was killed on the spot where his body was found, with several of his officers and servants round him, dead. He had several cutts with a gymeker, and was run thro' the body with a lance. Their last hope of his being a prisoner has very much increased their sorrow here, and we are going into mourning."¹ Königsmarck was not numbered among the dead; the Königsmarck luck was on his side, and by some miracle he escaped, though the Hanoverian troops were literally decimated.

The Duchess Sophia fell dangerously ill on receiving the news of her favourite son's death, and the Court despaired of her life. The sad affliction in which the ducal family were plunged broke down for a time all minor jealousies. The Duke of Celle came personally to Hanover to offer his condolences, and the common sorrow seemed to draw all members of the family closer together. A month later the Duchess Sophia rallied sufficiently to go with the Duke to Carlsbad to take the waters. In April Königsmarck came back to Hanover from the Morea, in company with the miserable remnant of the gallant troops who had set forth so bravely the autumn before. Some idea of the slaughter may be gained from the fact that of the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel's contingent, which started eleven thousand strong, only one hundred and thirty returned.

The summer of 1690 was a sad one at Hanover. The

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, February 25, 1690.

death of Prince Charles and the illness of the Duchess Sophia cast a gloom over a Court which as a rule suffered not death, nor sickness, nor misery to interrupt its dissipations and revelries. Prince George Louis went to Flanders to command his father's troops, and took Prince Ernest, the youngest of the princes, with him.¹ It was not a dangerous expedition, for the troops of the Allies were for the most part mobilising this year. William of Orange was not in Flanders; he had his hands full in Ireland, where, at the head of a motley army (English, Dutch, Danish, and German—doubtless the firstfruits of the great confederation), he was grappling with King James at the battle of the Boyne.

Königsmarck did not go to Flanders; he had had enough of fighting for the present, and he stayed on at Hanover, where the Princess Sophie Dorothea, abandoned, as usual, by her husband, who much preferred the camp to the Court and his military to his connubial duties, remained almost alone. Regarding Königsmarck as her staunch adherent and trusted friend, she rejoiced greatly on his safe return from the jaws of death, and gave him ready and frequent audience. In the lifetime of Prince Charles these interviews had excited no remark, for he went often to see his sister-in-law and took Königsmarck in attendance. But things were now different: the beloved Prince Charles, the true friend of both, was dead, and there was an enemy once more at work plotting the Princess's destruction. This was the Countess Platen, who, to her long-standing dislike of the Princess, now added an element of personal jealousy. She too had greeted Königsmarck's return with joy; but he had courteously but firmly repelled her advances,

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, May 27, 1690.

determined not to be caught tripping a second time. The Countess fancied she saw the cause of his coldness in his devotion to Sophie Dorothea, and from that moment she determined on her ruin. Opportunity to injure her soon came.

The etiquette of the Court was very strict, and the Princess, as we have remarked, was not always so careful to observe it in public as she might have been. As colonel of the Guards, Königsmarck had free access to the Palace. One day, when he was there on duty, he met the Princess coming in from the gardens with her little daughter. In the ordinary course he should have saluted and passed on. But the little girl was tired, and shirked the long flight of steps leading to the apartments of the Princess. Instead of handing her over to an attendant, Sophie Dorothea impulsively caught her up in her arms, and began to mount the steps with her burden. This alone was supposed to show a deplorable lack of dignity, and, to make matters worse, Königsmarck laughingly remonstrated with Her Highness, and insisted on taking the young Princess from her arms and carrying her up the stairs to the door of her apartments. Just at this moment who should pass by but the Countess Platen, who, seeing them laughing and talking together, cast a withering glance, and, with an ironically deep obeisance to the Princess, hurried off to report to the Duke this monstrous breach of etiquette.

Duke Ernest Augustus was now home from Carlsbad, much the better of his gout, and in fairly good temper with things generally. He was indulgent to Sophie Dorothea and her whims, except when they crossed his wishes. In this case he could not see anything very wrong in her conduct, though the circumstance was grossly exaggerated by the Countess, and he turned a

deaf ear to her hints and inuendoes, refusing to believe any evil. Perhaps he had a shrewd idea that jealousy was at the bottom of it. But afterwards he remonstrated with the Princess, and reprimanded Königsmarck for having been guilty of an impertinence, though, Hanoverian etiquette apart, he seems to have only performed an act of natural courtesy. The incident was reported about the Court, and from the tittle-tattle came the first breath of scandal which afterwards tarnished so sadly the mirror of Sophie Dorothea's fair name.

Soon after this the Hanoverian Court, except the Duchess Sophia, went on a visit to Brunswick, according to their annual custom, to divert themselves with an opera and the fair.¹ The Duke and Duchess of Celle were there also, and Duke Antony Ulrich with his family and a numerous Court. Antony Ulrich had now become co-Regent with his elder brother, Duke Rudolph Augustus, who, being a scholar and recluse, practically left all government in his hands. It was Antony Ulrich who dictated the policy of the House of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, and he kept his Court sometimes at Wolfenbüttel and sometimes at Brunswick. Brunswick was then a Hanseatic town of considerable importance, strongly fortified, and much frequented by merchants. The annual fair was a great event which the pleasure-loving Court of Hanover would not forego. Not the recent death of the Prince, nor the reverses of the army, in the Morea nor the ill-concealed enmity between the Duke of Hanover and Duke Antony Ulrich sufficed to keep Ernest Augustus from the Brunswick revels. Just now in the interests of the great alliance the feud between them was slumbering. Sophie Dorothea was there too, and so doubtless was Königsmarck. The death of the

¹ Colt's *Hanover Correspondence*, August 12, 1690.

Elector Palatine put a sudden end to the ill-timed festivities.

At the end of October Prince George Louis returned from Flanders with his troops, for winter quarters.¹ Absence had not improved his domestic relations; he spent all his time with Ermengarda Melusina Schulenburg, and his unhappy wife saw little or nothing of him; at this time she was his wife in name only.

In January, 1691, the Duke of Wolfenbüttel and the Duke of Hanover, each with a numerous retinue, went to the Hague to meet William and take part in the deliberations of the great Congress of the Allies. The Duke of Celle was to have gone too, but an attack of gout at the last moment prevented him, much to his chagrin, as he was a staunch friend of England. The quiet Dutch town presented a spectacle of extraordinary gaiety. William had just made his triumphal return to his own country for the first time since he had become King of England, and his Dutchmen welcomed him with acclamations and delight, which showed how deeply the Dutch phlegm could be stirred on occasion.² The streets were decorated by day and illuminated by night; every house was crowded, and the retinues of the princely throng were sore put about to find a lodging for their masters, much more for themselves. It was an imposing gathering; never before had Europe witnessed such a congress. The haughty Elector of Brandenburg was there, the young Catholic Elector of Bavaria, the regent of Würtemberg, the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Darmstadt, and the princes of the Sovereign Houses of Saxony, Holstein, Nausau, and, as before men-

¹ Colt's *Hanover Despatches*, October 24, 1690.

² A similar exhibition was made on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina.

tioned, of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Brunswick-Lüneburg; plenipotentiaries extraordinary were there from the Emperor Leopold, the kings of Spain, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, and the Duke of Savoy. The Hague was transformed. As Macaulay says:

“The grave capital of the most thrifty and industrious of nations was as gay as Venice in the carnival. The Walks, cut among those noble limes and elms in which the villa of the Prince of Orange is embosomed, were gay with the plumes, the stars, the flowing wigs, the embroidered coats, and the gold-hilted swords of gallants from London, Berlin, and Vienna. With the nobles were mingled sharpers not less gorgeously attired than they. At night the hazard tables were thronged; and the theatre was filled to the roof. Princely banquets followed one another in rapid succession. The meats were served in gold.”¹

It was magnificent, but it was not war. The great Congress resolved to oppose Louis with two hundred and twenty thousand men, but while they were talking, feasting, and junketing, the Grand Monarque was up and doing. Mons, the most important of the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, was besieged and fell. The glamour of the Congress was at once destroyed and the Allies were disquieted. Louis returned in triumph to Versailles, and William went back in chagrin to England for a brief visit. The other princes and potentates broke up in dudgeon and went their several ways, among them the Brunswick dukes, who returned to Hanover and Wolfenbüttel respectively.

On the return of the Brunswick princes, intrigues and

¹ Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iv., p. 7. Macaulay's authority was, *Relation de la Voyage de son Majesté Britannique en Hollande*, Burnett 11, 72.

discontents ran high at the Courts of Hanover and Celle. The fall of Mons and the continued uncertainty about the coveted Electorate made the Duke of Hanover turn his back upon William of Orange and lend a willing ear once more to the overtures of the French King. An envoy of Louis was at Hanover, and was received with great favour by Ernest Augustus and by Count and Countess Platen to whom he made large presents. The Duke himself does not seem to have been above the suspicion of bribery, for, writes Colt, "to show some of us he doth not want money, he bought a jewel of forty thousand crowns from a Jew of Amsterdam, or else it was a present, for by that channel the French money comes."¹

The English envoy was hard put to it to counteract these influences. The Duchess Sophia was on his side, but she could do little. Prince George Louis was with him too, but he could do less. On the other hand, the Princess Sophie Dorothea favoured the French party. "The eldest prince," writes Colt, "is a very reserved man and has good parts, and not in the least French in his inclinations, which give that party some discontent; they make all y^e court imaginable to y^e Princess, and I fear not without success, but she has no great fondness for the Prince."² The Princess was probably influenced by her mother, who was French at heart, as well as by birth, and, with the Duke of Hanover, they united in dissuading the Duke of Celle from sending troops to Flanders. Colt had spoken of the Duchess of Celle as likely to support France.

"She be a French woman, and consequently loves y^e imaginary glory and greatness of France; yet I am persuaded she wishes us [the English] better than those I

¹ Colt's *Despatches*, Locknam, June 10, 1691.

² *Ibid.*, Hanover.

have mentioned [Bernstorff, the Platens, etc.], whom she hates, because they have lessened her credit with the Duke, with whom she can now do but little." But now he had no doubt. "The Duchess of Celle be on y^e French side very much now. For my part I doubt she is changed in the principalls of her religion too, for she maintains that the Protestants might have stayed in France, and have complied by going to Mass as a less crime than quitting their King and country. It makes me often wonder at the Duke's patience, and how he suffers it . . . The Duchess here [Celle] hath engaged the Princess to assist her in persuading the Duke."¹ And again: "The Princess of Hanover and her son have been here till this day to take their leave of the Duke, and to remind him how much the Duchess is to be his care as well as theirs, so that the Duke of Hanover acts on sure grounds both ways. This Duke shows great fondness of his daughter and grandson."²

But George William's sympathies were stoutly English. He had great admiration for William of Orange, who had just sent him a present of horses, and nothing would induce him to intrigue with France. But he was won over to adopting a neutral attitude for a time, with the result that no troops from the princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg were sent to Flanders for the campaign of 1691.

These cross-currents and intrigues were very trying to the English envoy, and he writes home pages and pages telling of his efforts to stem the tide. Among other things, he gave a great party and entertained at supper all the distinguished visitors who were at Hanover, including the Electress of Brandenburg, the Duchess of

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, May 8, 1691.

² *Ibid.*, Celle, May 22, 1691.

Celle, the Duchess of Hanover, the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, the Princess of East Friesland and her party, and all the young princes.¹ The French emissary immediately gave another yet more splendid, and, as he reinforced it with costly presents all round, his influence was paramount.

The Princess Sophie Dorothea attended both parties; her sympathy with France is practically the only authenticated instance of her interference in politics, if we except her suspected intrigues with Wolfenbüttel.

As far as we can judge, Königsmarck sided with England. He had gone to the Hague in the suite of the Duke of Hanover, and among the gallants who swaggered and gambled and played in the taverns and streets of the old Dutch town none cut a braver figure than he. His intimacy with Sophie Dorothea seemed to grow no nearer; he could be of no service to her, and, though most friendly, she kept him at an arm's length. He was her most obedient servant, most faithful friend, but nothing more, and he desired to be much more. Baffled and depressed at this time, he wanted to leave the Hanoverian service and join the army of William; he had known England and loved it, and while at the Hague had been presented to the King, who had been pleased to receive him very graciously, and would have taken him into his service, for he had need of dare-devil soldiers of the Königsmarck type. But the Duke of Hanover would not let him go. He liked his dashing colonel of the Guards, and was unwilling that his Court should lose so brilliant an ornament; he, however, gave him leave to go to Brabant to see the English army, and thither Königsmarck went in May, but a month later he was back in Hanover.

Königsmarck celebrated his return by giving an enter-

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover.

tainment, a masquerade, which was honored by the attendance of many of the members of the ducal family. The Prince and Princess of Hanover, Princes Christian and Ernest, Count and Countess Platen, and the leading nobility of Hanover were among the guests. Everyone came in fancy dresses and masks. It was a warm summer night, and the company were dispersed about the dimly illuminated gardens. The opportunities of flirtation and intrigue were great, and the Countess Platen determined to improve the occasion by a dramatic little plot of her own. She had jealously watched the growing intimacy between Königsmarck and the Princess, and cast about for an opportunity to ruin them—or at least the Princess. To this end she stole one of Sophie Dorothea's gloves which she had inadvertently put down at supper (it was one of a pair George Louis had brought her from Flanders, richly embroidered and ornamented with her initials and coronet), and, concealing it in her dress, she presently lured Königsmarck into accompanying her to a far-off pavilion in the gardens. Here, without ado, she plunged into a violent flirtation with him, and so engrossed his attention that he did not hear footsteps until two men stood in the path before them in the moonlight. They were Count Platen and George Louis. The Prince had been led this way, seemingly inadvertently, by the husband in agreement with his wife. Uttering a startled exclamation, as though afraid of being discovered, Countess Platen took Königsmarck by the arm and fled from the pavilion; at the same time, unperceived by him, she dropped the Princess's glove. George Louis, who was not near enough to distinguish the masked lady, asked Count Platen who it was. The wily Minister professed ignorance, but on entering the pavilion picked up the glove and handed it to George

Louis, who recognised it as one of a pair he had given his wife. His jealous suspicions were aroused, and later they were confirmed by hearing the Princess ask for her missing glove. She could give no account of when and where she had lost it, and so far as the Prince was concerned these tactics were completely successful. Notoriously unfaithful himself, he was only too ready to suspect his wife of unfaithfulness.

But up till now Sophie Dorothea, though she had shown signs of wavering, had not told Königsmarck that she viewed him in any light but as a friend. He, on his part, had now gone far beyond the bounds of the most privileged friendship, and, forgetful of her rank and lonely position, had addressed the Princess in terms of extravagant devotion. Had she been wise, Sophie Dorothea would at once have closed the acquaintance. But she was not wise; and in a Court of universal laxity and intrigue she saw no harm in a little flirtation. It was the almost universal custom of the time. Nearly every woman of youth and beauty, whatever her rank, and whether married or not, had gallants sighing for her smiles and wearing her favours. The Electress of Brandenburg (her sister-in-law) had many lovers, and openly avowed her preferences; so had the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach, the Princess of Etting, and other princesses. Why should not she have one too? She was piqued by her husband's neglect, flattered by Königsmarck's homage, and perhaps, too, her heart was touched. She had known him from childhood. He had loved her always, so he swore. He was the ideal lover, young, handsome, and ardent, and she was hungry for love—even love like this. She had no idea, when she listened, of going beyond the bounds of discretion; yet even for her to listen was indiscreet, nay dangerous, surrounded as

she was by spies and enemies. She had no one in whom to confide; no one to advise her except Eléonore Knesebeck, who, though devoted to her mistress, was a sentimental, silly young woman, eager to vary the monotony of her duties by acting as go-between in an intrigue. It was impossible, now that suspicion was aroused, for Königsmarck to see the Princess so frequently as he had done, and in an evil moment she consented to allow him to write to her from time to time, though not promising to reply. The letters, to disarm suspicion, were to be addressed to Eléonore Knesebeck.

Thus did Sophie Dorothea first open the sluice gates a little way to a little stream, which later swelled into a mighty river, carrying her and Königsmarck before it, and engulfing them finally in the rush and roar of its waters. But the story of all this is best told in the letters themselves.

CHAPTER XI

*HISTORY AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE LETTERS*¹

I, for my part, value letters as the most vital part of biography.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THE original manuscripts of the remarkable correspondence between Sophie Dorothea and Königs-marck, a correspondence unparalleled in the annals of passion, except, perhaps, by the love-letters of Mirabeau and the Marquise de Monnier, is still preserved in the University of Lund, in Sweden.

The history of the letters previous to their finding a resting-place at Lund can be traced back through many generations.

It will be noted that the correspondence begins in July, 1691, and ends in December, 1693, thus covering a period of two and a half years. The first few letters of Königs-marck show that he was not quite sure of his footing with the Princess, and the *liaison* between them was yet in the bud. Within a few months we find his passion not only avowed without disguise, but reciprocated by the Princess with equal ardour. Except for a break in the first part of 1693, the letters follow the period of their love story until the last six months, January to June, 1694. During the greater part of this latter time

¹This chapter is an interpolation dealing with the history and authenticity of the correspondence and does not affect the narrative.

Königsmarck was at Dresden, and a few days after he returned to Hanover he was assassinated (July 1, 1694). It is known that many letters passed between the Princess and Königsmarck during this last six months, and a bundle of letters were seized by the Hanoverian Government in Königsmarck's lodgings a few days after his murder. These last letters are therefore missing from this correspondence, which otherwise forms a fairly complete record of the Princess's love story. The pertinent question is, how came the many hereafter published to be preserved?

Königsmarck, as we have seen, had two sisters, Amalie Wilhelmina, who married Count Carl Gustaf Lewenhaupt, a Swedish nobleman, who held for a time a commission as colonel in the army of the Duke of Celle, and served with the troops of Brunswick-Lüneburg in Flanders, and the beautiful Aurora, who was never married. Aurora was in the confidence of the lovers and on terms of friendship with the Princess. Countess Lewenhaupt must also have been cognisant of the *affaire*, though in a lesser degree. During Königsmarck's connexion with the Court of Hanover Aurora resided sometimes at Hamburg, often with him at Hanover, and was occasionally at Celle, Brunswick, and other places, but always circling around the Courts of the Brunswick princes. The Countess Lewenhaupt was for the most part with her husband, whose military duties kept him much at Celle; but she frequently met her brother or sister. Both sisters often saw their brother, and between him and them there existed a strong affection.

Aurora sympathised with the love affair between her brother and the Princess, and at quite an early stage we find her aware of it. Letters were often sent through

her hands; and so active a part did she play that when suspicion was aroused in the autumn of 1692, Ernest Augustus sent her a message to the effect that she would do well to give Hanover a wide berth in future. For the lovers to keep each other's letters in their several possession was dangerous, and they were unwilling to burn them. For their safe keeping, therefore, it would seem that both Königsmarck and the Princess deposited (at stated periods, probably at the end of every six months) their letters with Aurora: the Princess giving up those she had received from him, and Königsmarck those he had received from her.

This continued until the end of 1693. In the six months that followed (January to June, 1694) Königsmarck did not see his sisters; he was in Saxony, and they were at Hamburg. The letters he had received from the Princess during that period were still in his possession when he was murdered, and, as we have seen, were seized by the Government. The letters the Princess had received from him were in *her* possession, and she probably burned them at the first hint that everything was discovered. But the rest—those published here—were in Aurora's keeping at Hamburg, outside the jurisdiction of the Elector of Hanover.

Of the efforts which both sisters, especially Aurora, made to discover their missing brother, and to bring his assassins to justice, we shall have occasion to speak later. They mourned their brother long and sincerely, and treasured everything connected with his memory. Doubtless these letters were among their most cherished possessions. Aurora, it is well known, led for some years a wandering and adventurous life, and for better security she must have transferred this momentous and

bulky correspondence to her sister's, Countess Lewenhaupt's, keeping. Count Lewenhaupt, soon after the murder of his brother-in-law, quitted the service of the Duke of Celle, and returned with his wife to Sweden, where he henceforth lived on his estates.

From this time the history of the letters is categorical, and may be traced step by step. Amalie, Countess Lewenhaupt, kept the letters, and on her death-bed gave them to her son, Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt, telling him to cherish them with great care, as they had cost "her brother his life, and a king's mother her freedom." Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt duly fulfilled his mother's injunction, and the letters remained among his most carefully guarded possessions all his life. He died without male heirs, and this branch of the house of Lewenhaupt became extinct. He bequeathed the letters to his daughter and heiress, Amalie Beata, who was married to a great Swedish noble, Baron Hans Ramel, of Ofvedskloster. In a chest in the library of Ofvedskloster, the country seat of the Ramel family, these letters remained for many years. Amalie Beata, Baroness Ramel (*née* Lewenhaupt) died in 1810, and at her death bequeathed the letters to her daughter, Elisabeth Sophia Amalie Beata, who was married to Count Gustaf Adolph Sparre. The offspring of this marriage was also a daughter, Christina Amalie Hedvig Adelaide, who married Count Jacob de la Gardie, of Löberöd, the founder of the famous de la Gardie Archives. Count de la Gardie, who was a wealthy nobleman, a bibliophile, and a great antiquarian, was naturally interested in these letters, which came into his possession in 1817 through his marriage with the lady aforesaid. Quite apart from their historical value, the way in which they had been

handed down through generations of his wife's family (she was the great-great-granddaughter of Countess Lewenhaupt, *née* Königsmarck) gave them a personal interest in his eyes. The letters were removed from Ofvedskloster to Löberöd, where they formed part of his celebrated collection of books and manuscripts.

It was after the letters came into Count de la Gardie's possession that their existence became known to the outside world; hitherto they had been treated as family papers of a private nature. The famous collection of archives at Löberöd attracted scholars from far and wide. In 1831 Probster Wiselgein, in his work, *De la Gardieska Archivet* (the de la Gardie Archives), vol. ix., mentions that this correspondence forms part of the archives, and quotes a single letter from the Princess in the original French as a specimen. Two years after, this same letter was republished in the *Magazin für Literatur des Auslandes* (Journal of Foreign Literature), 1833. But the correspondence did not receive much attention until 1847, when Professor Palmblad, of the University of Upsala, in the *Blätter für Literarische Unterhaltung*, published a few short extracts in the original French, together with a brief introduction. This he afterwards republished as an appendix in his historical romance, *Aurora Königsmarck*. To Palmblad's labours we shall have occasion to refer again.

When Count de la Gardie died he bequeathed his almost priceless collection to different libraries in Sweden. To the University of Lund he left many valuable books and manuscripts, including the correspondence of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck. In accordance with the Count's bequest the letters were deposited in the University Library of Lund in 1848, and they remain there

until this day. It is not easy to see how the history of these documents could be better authenticated.¹

Shortly after the letters were deposited at Lund, J. H. Gadd, who from 1848 to 1850 held the post of assistant-librarian to the University, made a copy of the correspondence. This copy he afterwards sold, or gave, to the late Mrs. Evelyn Everett Green, a lady well known for her historical researches, and who was for many years employed in the State Paper Office. Mrs. Everett Green, who was in correspondence with Count Schulenburg-Klosserode, author of *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*, apparently thought of publishing these letters, for she began the fragment of a preface. But for some reason she desisted from her task, and in 1870 sold Gadd's manuscript copy to the British Museum. This copy, in French, bears nothing to show where the original letters are preserved. I discovered by accident that they were at Lund, when at Leipzig in 1898. On communicating with the University authorities at Lund I found that none of them had any knowledge of the manuscript copy in the British Museum, and they seemed doubtful of its genuineness. I therefore made a journey to Lund for the purpose of consulting the original manuscripts, and found that the copy in the British Museum was on the whole a faithful

¹ Table showing the descent and ownership of the letters from the time Aurora Königsmarck gave them to her sister until the present day:

Amalie, Countess Lewenhaupt (<i>née</i> Königsmarck),	
Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt (her son),	|
Baroness Ramel (his daughter),	|
Countess Sparre (her daughter),	|
Countess de la Gardie (her daughter),	|
Count de la Gardie (her husband),	|
The University Library of Lund, 1848.	|

one. At Lund, too, I was able to trace the history of the letters and to examine in detail the documents.

It would be hard to find a more fitting resting-place for these letters than the University Library of Lund. Nestling under the shadow of the great cathedral, surrounded by the elms and limes of the beautiful Lunda-gård, the old library seems to breathe the very spirit of the past. In the silent rooms, with their mellow tomes and paintings of dead and gone worthies, there reigns a profound peace, in strong contrast to the riotous passion, the fret and the fume, the rapture and despair, which run through these records of an ill-fated love, and make them human documents indeed. As we read, the hopes and the fears, the joys and the struggles of the unlucky lovers rise before us with extraordinary vividness. The writers live and move and breathe again; the air is peopled with their presence; and then—we look up from the page and come back to the old library and the great stillness, and realise something of the littleness of human passions beside the passionless flight of time, Two centuries have gone; the lovers are dead; the hands that penned these burning words, the eyes that wept, the hearts that throbbed as they were written. have crumbled into dust. But their witness is here—here in these old and faded pages, which breathe even now, faint as the scent of dead rose leaves, the perfume of their passion.

A word now as to the outward semblance of these letters. They are fairly well preserved, the paper being for the most part of a tough though flimsy nature, which in places shows the handwriting through. The ink is dim and faded to a dull brown; here and there it is so faint as to be almost illegible. Königsmarck's letters differ in size, some being written on the ordinary notepaper of

the day, others on scraps torn apparently from a pocket-book; some, too, are weather-stained, as though they had travelled far. Envelopes in all cases are missing; nor were they generally used in those days. The letter was folded and sealed. Some of Königsmarck's letters bear his seal in red or black wax, and a device—a little heart within a large one—with the motto, *Così fosse il vostro dente il mio*. One, in addition, has the ends of a green silk ribbon under the seal, showing how the letter was tied. One, bearing date Halle, August 3/13, is addressed to "Mademoiselle la Frole de Knesbeck, à Zelle"; one is addressed "à la Gouvernante," one merely "Pour la Personne Connue"; but there are none directly addressed to the Princess. All Königsmarck's letters are written in the same great sprawling hand.

The letters of the Princess are written on paper of good quality, and almost without exception of uniform size. Like Königsmarck's, they bear evidence of having been folded; but the envelopes are missing, and, unlike his, none of them bear seal or superscription. They are written in two distinct handwritings, which bears out the theory that some were written by the Princess in her own hand, and others (for motives of secrecy) by Knesbeck at the Princess's dictation. In some also an attempt is evidently made to disguise the handwriting—so that the caligraphy does not present the uniform appearance noticed in Königsmarck's letters; but, disguised or undisguised, transcribed by Knesbeck or the Princess, they are easier to read than Königsmarck's on account of their better penmanship, though occasionally they too show traces of haste.

The letters number over two hundred, and form two bulky packets. With the exception of a few fragments of German poetry which Königsmarck quotes here and

there, they are all in French, that being the language then generally used at Courts, and especially by the Princess, on account of her French mother and education. To Königsmarck—a Swedish noble by birth—French was more familiar than German, though his knowledge of either was far from perfect. The letters are arranged in little or no chronological order, and run in batches; thus we have first a batch of the Princess's letters, then a batch of Königsmarck's, then another of the Princess's, and finally another batch from Königsmarck. Quite two-thirds are written by Königsmarck and the rest by the Princess—if we except two or three brief notes, or rather postscripts, from Knesebeck.

If the lovers' letters differ in outward appearance, they differ even more in style and diction. Königsmarck's are very badly written, ill-spelt, and often ungrammatical, which may be explained by the fact that he was writing in a foreign language which, though he could speak it fluently, he had not thoroughly mastered. Often, by accident or design, he falls back on phonetic spelling of French words, which at first renders them almost impossible to decipher, and it is only by reading them aloud that one can grasp their meaning. For instance:

<i>Saite</i>	= Cette
<i>Can</i>	= Quand
<i>Sansaire</i>	= Sincere
<i>Cas</i>	= Qua
<i>Astor</i>	= A cette heure

and many other renderings equally erratic. Königsmarck's style, like his handwriting, was rough-and-ready. Many of his letters were written in haste when on active military service, and one does not expect literary grace

from a soldier writing often under difficulties, and always in a foreign language. His sentences are abrupt, and frequently broken by exclamations, interjections, and interrogations, especially when he writes under stress of excitement. But he has a knack of occasionally enforcing his meaning by a happy phrase or a homely illustration, and this, combined with frequent allusions to men and things, makes his letters of more general interest than those of the Princess. Egotism is the dominant note. His wit has at times a knack of degenerating into coarseness—a coarseness so great that even in that coarse age we cannot help wondering how a man in his position should be found writing such things to a princess, to a woman he loved and revered. But we have to remember that it was an age of license and freedom of speech; and even the letters of the estimable Electress Sophia to the Duchess d'Orleans, whose virtues were unquestioned, and whose intellectual accomplishments were far in advance of her time, were disfigured by a coarseness bordering at times on indecency. If a great princess could so write to another princess we cease to wonder at Königsmarck, who was a man and a soldier and surrounded by the licentiousness of camp and Court. Most of his worst lapses are anecdotes relating to his companions in arms; they are not many, and I have taken the liberty of suppressing them, since they are not germane to the narrative.

The letters of the Princess are very different in style and diction from those of her lover. They are absolutely free from coarseness (in this respect offering a favourable contrast, for instance, to the letters of the Electress Sophia and the Duchess d'Orleans), and give evidence of a refined and gentle nature. They are in admirable French, and if here and there a word is misspelt it is

evidently the result of haste. Many of the Princess's letters are written with grace and felicity of diction, to which no translation can do justice. The burden of her theme is ever, "I love you," or, "You are not true to me." The whole of the correspondence, indeed, both her letters and Königsmarck's, are alternated with passionate avowals of love and equally passionate reproaches. Theirs was not a love that ran smoothly, but was broken from first to last by fears from without and jealousies from within. Yet it is impossible not to see that, after their manner, each loved the other fondly.

The Princess was a ready writer, the chief blemish of her letters being a tendency to repetition and an extraordinary diffuseness; she would take pages to say what might have been compressed into a few sentences. But this is a fault common to love-letters—which are not written for the edification of the world, but only for the one to whom they are addressed; and we must not judge them by the ordinary canons of literary criticism. In the Princess's case, too, there was often a necessity for her to wrap her meaning in a cloud of words, lest it should be too readily discovered, if her epistles fell into other hands. Though her letters are in at least two distinct handwritings, they are all identical in style and expression—another proof that those the Princess did not write with her own hand she dictated word for word to Knesebeck.

An elaborate cypher, or rather series of cyphers, is used throughout the correspondence for the names of persons and places. To this cypher the lovers alone held the key. All the personages mentioned in the letters are disguised under different names; as, for instance:

<i>L'Aventurière</i>	Countess Aurora Königsmarck
<i>Le Rèformeur</i> (<i>Le</i> ...	
<i>Rèformateur</i>) ...	Prince George Louis
<i>Don Diègo</i>	The Elector Ernest Augustus
<i>La Romaine</i>	The Electress Sophia
<i>Le Grondeur</i>	The Duke of Celle
<i>La Pedagogue</i>	The Duchess of Celle
<i>La Perspective</i>	The Countess Platen
<i>La Boule</i>	The Electress of Brandenburg
<i>Le bon Homme</i>	Marshal Podevils
<i>L'Innocent</i>	Prince Ernest Augustus
<i>Colin</i>	Prince Maximilian
<i>La Marionette</i>	Princess of Hesse
<i>Le Satyre</i> } ...	Hanoverian Ministers
<i>Le Barbouilleur</i> } ...	
<i>La Douairière</i>	The Princess of East Friesland
<i>La Gazelle</i>	Countess von Lewenhaupt
<i>La Grosse Dondon</i> ...	Madame von Ilten
<i>La Confidente</i> }	Fräulein von Knesebeck
<i>La Sentinelle</i> } ...	
<i>La Gouvernante</i> }	
<i>Lèonisse</i> }	Princess Sophie Dorothea.
<i>La Cœur Gauche</i> } ...	
<i>La Petite Louche</i> }	
<i>Le Chevalier</i> }	Königsmarck.
<i>Tercis</i> }	

Some of these nicknames are not very complimentary to the persons for whom they are intended, but they are comparatively easy to decipher. The task is much more difficult when we come to the other cypher, in figures. Speaking roughly, numbers of one hundred and upwards signify names of men; two hundred and upwards, names

of women; three hundred and upwards, names of places.
As for example:

100	...	...	...	Elector Ernest Augustus
101	...	...	...	Duke of Celle
102	...	...	...	Prince George Louis
103	...	...	...	Marshal Podevils
112	...	...	...	Prince Maximilian
120	...	...	...	Königsmarck
128	...	...	...	Bülow
129	...	...	...	Bernstorff
200	...	...	...	The Electress Sophia
201	...	...	...	Princess Sophie Dorothea
202	...	...	...	Countess Platen
207	...	...	...	Fräulein von Schulenburg
214	...	...	...	Fräulein von Knesebeck
226	...	...	...	Countess Aurora Königsmarck
227	...	...	...	The Duchess of Celle
300	...	...	...	Hanover
301	...	...	...	Luisburg
302	...	...	...	Herrenhausen
305	...	...	...	Celle
306	...	...	...	Brockhausen.

In the letters which follow, translated from the French of the original manuscripts into English, I have endeavoured to render this intricate cypher legible, and have substituted everywhere the real names of persons and places. The task of translation and unravelling the cypher has not been easy,¹ and if an error should be dis-

¹ In this task I was aided by the fragment of a key to the cypher found with the letters at Lund.

covered it must not be ascribed to any inaccuracy in the original letters, but to my rendering, since in spite of every care it is impossible to guard against the possibility of a chance error. I have further endeavoured to reduce the letters to something like chronological order—also a difficult task, for only four have the year inscribed, many are without date, some have the day of the week, and a few the time of the day; and in such cases it is only from the text that one can guess the dates with accuracy. To do this it has been necessary to sort the letters from the batches into which they are divided in the original manuscripts, and to allow them to answer one another in due order. In the correspondence during the campaign of 1692, for instance, it will be seen that Königsmarck's letters and those of the Princess answer one another freely. I have also, to better elucidate the text and preserve the flow of the narrative, interspersed the letters with a record of current events gleaned from Colt's despatches and other documents, and have annotated them where necessary. The letters hereafter given represent two-thirds of the whole; the remainder has been omitted simply because it is made up mainly of repetition and unimportant details, and to quote it in full would be to weary and not to edify. For the first time these letters are published in any language—if we except the few fragments (which would make not more than six pages of this book) given by Palmblad in a Swedish book long since out of print—and for the first time they are now translated into English from the original manuscripts, edited, and compared and tested with contemporary records.

Palmblad, as we have mentioned, prefaced his extracts with a brief introduction, which it is well to examine in detail, since this is practically the only medium through

which the existence of the correspondence has hitherto been known.

W. F. Palmblad was a man of considerable literary repute, a professor of the University of Upsala, and a zealous antiquarian. But he lacked one quality indispensable to the historian—accuracy; he was too ready to jump to conclusions without first verifying his facts from contemporary records. He examined the manuscript letters when they were at Löberöd in the possession of the Count de la Gardie, and learned their history from their owner, which was amply verified from the family records. He then made an examination of the correspondence which can only be regarded as cursory, took out a few extracts here and there, and prefaced them with an introduction, in which he declares his firm belief in the genuineness of the letters, but by his inaccuracies unconsciously does damage to the very point he labours to prove—inaccuracies which one or two subsequent writers have seized upon as proofs of the spuriousness of a correspondence they have never seen. Later, it is true, another authority, Count Schulenburg-Klosterode, who also believed in the genuineness of the letters, in *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*, endeavoured to set Palmblad right on certain points of chronology and cypher, but a false impression had been given of the correspondence which it was not easy to eradicate.

Even in his description of the appearance of the letters Palmblad is inaccurate. He speaks of postmarks, but there are none visible; he describes the Princess's letters as written "in an elegant hand, on very fine, gilt-edged paper." It is a mere detail; but the paper is not gilt-edged, and is the ordinary letter-paper of the day; while as for the "elegant hand," which would convey the idea of a sloping Italian penmanship, the Princess's letters

are in two distinct handwritings, and in each case are written in rather a bold hand for a woman, certainly the reverse of "elegant."

The professor has also made mistakes about the cypher, especially the cypher in numbers; and in the extracts he publishes he has muddled men, women, and places in a hopeless manner, and this makes nonsense. His extracts, which are taken mainly from Königsmarck's letters, are chiefly made up of the racy anecdotes, which for reasons already given I do not quote. The professor has collected every one of these anecdotes (not many in all), and gives them as a fair specimen of the whole. Doubtless this course avoided chronological and other difficulties; but to quote them to the exclusion of other and more important matter is to give a false impression of the correspondence and the man.

Again, Palmblad makes the assertion, "Of Königsmarck's *liaison* with the Countess Platen the letters do not say a word." Here again it is evident he has made a mistake in the cypher, and confused the Countess with some one else, for, as will be seen, the letters teem with allusions to Countess Platen (either as *La Perspective* or as 202), and there are frequent references to an understanding or flirtation between her and Königsmarck. The Princess is again and again inflamed with jealousy on this account, and reproaches her lover bitterly, while he is equally fluent with his excuses.

But the gravest inaccuracy is yet to come. In his survey of the letters Palmblad made no attempt to classify them or arrange them in order of date—a task which he declares to be "impossible." As he had little knowledge of Hanoverian history at the time the letters were written, or of contemporary events, the task was doubtless impossible to him; he would therefore have done wisely

to have left it alone altogether, and not have tried to cover his ignorance by the wildest guess work. Yet this is what he has done. He says: "In one letter mention is made of Busche, who was the trusty friend and confidant of Prince George, and who died in the beginning of the year 1688, and four other letters have the year 1693 given, so we know with certainty that the correspondence was spread over a period of six years." And again: "In the letter in which Busche is mentioned, therefore, written before or during the year 1687, Königsmarck is on the most trusted footing with the Princess; and in the year 1685 Königsmarck was evidently in Hanover; and soon after that it appears that the very close intimacy between them began. The Princess, her daughter, who afterwards married the King of Prussia, was born March 16, 1686; and it is a matter of surmise and strong doubt whether the family of Prussian kings spring from the Guelph or Königsmarck blood." The whole of this theory is built upon the surmise that the Busche mentioned (not in one letter only, but at least a dozen), was the same Busche who married Countess Platen's sister, and who died early in 1688.

Now the Busche family was a numerous one, and held a high position in Hanover. If Palmblad had read the letters carefully, and had possessed any knowledge of Hanoverian affairs, he would have seen from the context that the Busche mentioned was *not* the man who died in 1688, but Philip Albert Busche, a privy councillor and prominent minister, who later was president of the divorce court which pronounced judgment on the Princess. Thus the statement that the letters began in or before 1687 and extended over a period of six years is absolutely incorrect, and the endeavour to cast a slur upon the legitimacy of the Princess's daughter, after-

wards Queen of Prussia, is consequently abortive. There exists no shred of evidence to show that Königsmarck was in Hanover in 1685 (he was in England), nor, indeed, until 1688, two years after the birth of the Princess's daughter. And it will be seen from the letters themselves that the *affaire* between Königsmarck and the Princess did not assume an intimate footing until the end of 1691 or the beginning of 1692; until then the borderland had not been crossed. Whatever were his later relations with the Princess, he was neither at Hanover nor Celle when her children were born, and there is no doubt as to their legitimacy. Palmblad's slur on the birth of the Queen of Prussia is as gross a fabrication as the Jacobite lie of calling George II. "the little Königsmarck." The whole theory, which can only have been invented to gratify Palmblad's hatred of the House of Prussia, therefore, falls to the ground; and it is no wonder that, starting from so false a chronological point, he finds it "impossible" to arrange the letters in any order of date.

We have dwelt fully on Palmblad's introduction and extracts not because of its merit, which is little, nor its size, which is infinitesimal, but because it has hitherto been practically the only publication which deals with these letters, and students and historians have had no other criterion whereby they might test their genuineness. There were the original letters at Lund, it is true; but the few authorities, such as Schaumann and Köcher,¹ who have passed adverse judgment on this correspondence, never took the trouble to go there and examine the manuscripts personally, but founded their theories on

¹ Against the adverse opinion of these authorities may fairly be set Thackeray and Carlyle, who accept the letters as genuine. But, like Schaumann and Köcher, they never saw the originals.

Palmblad's version. Yet it is obviously impossible to pronounce a fair judgment on a correspondence of this kind without seeing the original manuscripts, and with no knowledge of it save a few fragmentary extracts and an introduction full of chronological and other errors. It is only by examining the whole correspondence in the original manuscripts and comparing it with contemporary documents, that a just idea of its value can be gained.

Judged by this test, these letters will reveal themselves as absolutely genuine, and further examination will show that they contain internal evidence of their authenticity. Let us briefly glance at this also.

For our present purpose the correspondence may be divided into:

1. Königsmarck's letters to the Princess prior to the campaign in Flanders of 1692 (July, 1691, to June, 1692).
2. The Princess's and Königsmarck's letters to one another during the campaign in Flanders and until the granting of the Hanoverian Electorate (June to December, 1692).
3. The Princess's and Königsmarck's letters to one another, when she was at Brockhausen and Celle with her parents, and he at Hanover (June to July, 1693).
4. Königsmarck's letters to the Princess when he was campaigning against the Danes and after his return to Hanover (August to December, 1693).

This is merely a rough classification, but it will serve.

The times were stirring in the Courts of Hanover and Celle, and indeed in all Europe, because of the war of the great Alliance against Louis XIV. Königsmarck served with the allied armies in the campaign in Flanders of 1692, as colonel of a Hanoverian regiment, and

the following year he served as colonel of a regiment of troops of Hanover and Celle in the abortive campaign of the Brunswick-Lüneburg princes against the Danes on the banks of the Elbe. Many of his letters to the Princess were written when on active military service; and though one does not look to love-letters for news, it is only to be expected there should be some allusion to current events. We find in Königsmarck's letters from Flanders mention of King William of England, Prince George Louis, the Elector of Bavaria, Duke Frederick Augustus of Saxony (afterwards the Elector Augustus the Strong), and other exalted personages who were with the allied armies at that time; also of certain events in the campaign, such as the battle of Steinkirk, the attempted siege of Charleroy, and so forth. In the same way, the following year, during the campaign against the Danes, allusion is made to the burning of Ratzeburg and the negotiations between the Danes and the Brunswick-Lüneburg princes. The same may be said of the Hanoverian intrigues for obtaining the Electorate. If these mentions of well-known persons and events were in any way incorrect, it would afford, of course, strong presumption against the genuineness of the letters; but they are quite accurate. Moreover, the allusions are made evidently without design, and arise naturally and casually in the course of the correspondence as things known, not only to the writer, but for the most part to the person to whom he is writing.

It may be admitted that, so far, this does not prove much, for the events and personages in connexion with the great campaign in Flanders, for instance, were so well known that only a clumsy forger would make a mistake. But the case is far otherwise when we come to analyse the many references which both the Princess and

Königsmarck freely make concerning the persons who figure in the life of Hanover and Celle, and incidents which were occurring from day to day in those little Courts. We have, for instance, frequent mention of, or allusion to, the arrival of this prince, or the departure of that princess, the coming and going of foreign envoys, and the movements of the Hanoverian Court from Hanover to Luisburg, or Luisburg to Hanover or Herrenhausen; of the perpetual motion of the Court of Celle from Celle to Brockhausen, to Epsdorff, to Wienhausen, to Göhre, and so on; of visits between the ducal brothers, of journeys to Hamburg, Brunswick, or Berlin, of carnivals and Court festivities, all of which could not possibly have been written except by some person or persons intimately acquainted, or connected with the daily life of these petty Courts. Now, a forger of spurious love-letters would certainly avoid frequent reference to minute events, and content himself with writing mere vague avowals of passion¹ which might be written by any one to any one; in short, he would keep to generalities and avoid particularities, which are so many pitfalls into which he might tumble, and by his errors betray his fraud.

Here, then, we have a test. If the frequent references to persons and incidents in these letters can be proved to be incorrect or inaccurate; if, for instance, it can be shown that when the Electress of Brandenburg is said to have been visiting Hanover she was at Berlin, that when Prince Max is stated to have been at Celle he was in Italy, that when the Court of Celle was at Brockhausen it was at Epsdorff, that when the Princess writes from Celle she was at Hanover, that when certain envoys are repre-

¹ The letter of Lassaye, quoted in vol. i., pp. 106-7, affords an excellent illustration of this.

sented as having been at Hanover they were not there, or certain festivities are described which did not take place,—if it can be shown that these things (of no importance in themselves, but very important in their bearing on the letters) are falsely and inaccurately stated, then it follows, as a matter of logic, that the letters are themselves false and inaccurate and could not have been written by the persons from whom they profess to come. But if, on the other hand, it can be proved by independent testimony and “undesigned coincidences” (as Paley would say) that the mention of persons are accurate and the allusions to even minute events correct in every detail, it affords the strongest possible proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the letters.

But how to apply such a test?

At first sight this is difficult, for the daily life of these little German Courts is not a matter of history, and the ordinary historical records shed little light upon it. Fortunately I found in the State Paper Office, London, the despatches and entry book of Sir William Dutton Colt, sometime English envoy at Hanover, which furnish exactly what we want—independent and authoritative documents with which we may test the accuracy of many of the minute events mentioned in these letters. Colt was envoy to the princes of Brunswick from 1689 to 1693; his entry book covers the period from July, 1689, to December, 1692, so that the period of eighteen months only is coincident with the letters, which do not begin until July, 1691. Early in January, 1693, he went to Dresden, and afterwards was but little at Hanover or Celle, so further evidence is lacking. But there is enough for our purpose. In Colt's entry book we have a record, week by week, almost day by day, of the Courts of Hanover and Celle; it is wholly made up of copies of

his despatches to the English Government. At his death the book, with other official documents, was sent to London, and has since been preserved in the Archives. It was, of course, never seen by any one in Hanover outside the English Legation, and it has only been open to the public in England since the Home Office and Foreign Office papers of that period were removed to the State Paper Office. It is scarcely necessary, therefore, to say that between this official record and the correspondence now at Lund there could have been no possible collusion. By no possibility could the writers of these letters have seen Colt's despatches. Where coincidences arise they are absolutely undesigned, and the points of agreement are those which necessarily occur when truthful and independent records touch on the same incidents. Colt's despatches are a record of facts and events; the love-letters of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck are love-letters first of all, and where mention is made of persons and events, it is made incidentally and secondarily. Nevertheless, many coincidences occur and afford strong corroboration of the genuineness of the letters. I have noted them in more detail in the correspondence itself. Here it will suffice to quote a few in illustration of my meaning:

The Letters.

On and after June 20, 1692, the Princess dates her letters from Brockhausen, showing that her parents, with whom she was staying, had moved thither from Celle.

Colt's Despatches.

"The Duke of Celle is now at Brockhausen."—Colt's *Despatch*, June 17, 1692.

In her letter of June 23, 1692, the Princess mentions that Prince Max is staying with the Court of Celle at Brockhausen.

In his despatches of this time Colt also mentions that Prince Max was staying with the Duke of Celle at Brockhausen, he being in disgrace with his father because of the Moltke affair.

"You have been dancing at Colt's *fête*."—*Königsmarck to the Princess, Venlo, July 5/15.*

From Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, June 20, 1692, we learn that on Sunday, the 18th, he gave a great "diversion," which the Duke and Duchess and all the Court attended.

"I am grieved you are displeased because I went to Monsieur Colt's *fête*, but I could not avoid going; they pressed me so much."—*The Princess to Königsmarck, Brockhausen, (?) July 2, 1692.*

"What was the day of the *fête*?"—*Königsmarck to the Princess, Dist, July 5/15.*

"Sunday was the *fête* I spoke to you about."—*The Princess to Königsmarck, Celle, July 13/23, 1692.*

"They say the Electress of Brandenburg is at Luisburg on a visit to her parents." — *The Princess to Königsmarck*, Celle, July 18/28, 1692.

"The floods still detain us here unfortunately." — *The Princess to Königsmarck*, July 2, 1692.

"We start to-morrow for Celle." — *The Princess to Königsmarck*, Brockhausen, July 7, 1692.

Her next letter, July 9, is dated from Celle.

"My Lord Portland showed me much favour, and assured me the King held me in his esteem." — *Königsmarck to the Princess*, Wavern, August 14/24, 1692.

"The Duke of Celle has lost a great many men [in the Battle of Steinkirk]." — *Königsmarck to the Princess*, from the camp near Wavern, about August 5, 1692.

"Moltke was executed on Monday, and the Court of Hanover has gone to Luisburg to be out of the way." — *Colt's Despatch*, Hanover, July 18, 1692.

"The extraordinary floods have kept the Duke from Celle." — *Colt's Despatch*, July 4, 1692.

"The Duke since his return hither. . . ." — *Colt's Despatch*, Celle, July 11, 1692.

Colt mentions in his despatches that Lord Portland was with the King in Flanders during the campaign of 1692.

"The Duke here is really very much troubled for the loss of his troops in the late action." — *Colt's Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

The Princess, to Königs-marck, in a letter from Celle, August 6/16, 1692, notifies the movements of the Court, and says in two days she will accompany her mother to Wiesbaden (which she does).

"Max is going the day after to-morrow to meet the Electress of Brandenburg, and will accompany her to Luisburg."—*The Princess to Königs-marck*, Celle, August 6/16, 1692.

"They tell me the Electress of Brandenburg has postponed her visit. She was to have arrived two days after I left. All the horses were ordered for her equipage. The Duke had given up to her his apartments at Luisburg, and they also brought a band. All that for nothing!"—*The Princess to Königs-marck*, Wiesbaden, August 21/31, 1692.

"My news from your part of the world [Hanover] tells

"This Court [Celle] will the next week remove from hence, the Duke to follow his hunting, and the Duchess goes to Wiesbaden, near Mayence, for her health."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

"The Electress of Brandenburg is passing by here on her way to Luisburg, where the Hanoverian Court is at a country house."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

"Just now we have the news that the Electress of Brandenburg doth not come so soon as she intended, all things having been provided for her."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12/22, 1692.

In his despatch, September 15, 1692, Colt mentions

me the Duke is going to hunt at Epsdorff, where your father already is."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Denise, September 10/20, 1692.

"I was hindered the day before yesterday from finishing my letter by the alarm that the French were going to attack Charleroy, but it came to nothing."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Afflegen, October 6/16, 1692.

"The journey to Berlin will not take place."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Hanover, November 1692.

"We have just heard the welcome news that the French have failed in their design on Charleroy."—Colt's *Despatch*, Göhre, October 7/17, 1692.

"The journey to Berlin is postponed."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, November 18, 1692.

These few coincidences, examples of many more, afford proofs of the genuineness of the correspondence, which a perusal of it as a whole cannot fail to strengthen. The very faults of the letters go to prove their authorship. But the strongest evidence of all in our opinion, is to be found in the frequent and unconscious self-revelations of the personality of the writers. These revelations do not always show the lovers in the most favourable light, but at least they are very human. Love has been defined as *l'égoïsme à deux*. If that be true, it would be hard to find a stronger illustration of it than these letters afford.

CHAPTER XII

THE DAWN OF PASSION

(1691)

What can we fear, we two?

O God, Thou seest us Thy creatures bound
Together by that law which holds the stars
In palpitating cosmic passion bright;
By which the very sun enthralls the earth,
And all the waves of the world faint to the moon.
Even by such attractions we two rush
Together through the everlasting years.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS, *Paolo and Francesca*.

THE first mention of Königsmarck in Colt's despatches tallies with the first letter in the following correspondence, and sets at rest the question as to whether Königsmarck actually held a commission in the Hanoverian service. Some doubt had arisen concerning the safety of Hamburg; and Colt, writing to Lord Nottingham, says, "There is not the least appearance of any danger for the city of Hamburg. The troops of Hanover march towards the Elbe and two regiments of Foot under Königsmarck and Cordons."¹

It was while Königsmarck was absent on this expedition that his correspondence with the Princess began. The first letter, written while he was on the march, runs as follows:

"АHT, July 1.

"I am *in extremis*, and the only thing that can save me

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, June 28 and July 7, 1691.

is a few lines from your incomparable hand. If I had the good fortune to behold them I should forthwith be healed. I hope you will not be so cruel as to refuse me this favour, for, since it is you who cause my sufferings, it is only just that you should send me comfort. Were I not writing to one for whom my respect is as great as my love, I would find better terms to express my devotion; but, fearing to offend, I end here, only beseeching you not to forget me wholly, and to believe me always your slave."

The Princess did not respond at once; she had not promised to answer Königsmarck's letters, though she consented to receive them. She must have known how dangerous it was for her to embark on a correspondence of this kind; she hesitated, and, hesitating, yielded. After a little time she seems to have sent him a few lines, and that the trend of her epistle was not rebuke may be gathered from his reply:

"[ON THE MARCH, undated].¹

"I received your answer to-day. How anxious I have been all this time! I vow the fear that you had utterly forgotten me has been the cause of my illness lasting so long; the suspense gave me intense suffering. Now that I know the contrary I pick up courage, and shall hope soon to see you again. Verily, it is I who should complain, I who am constrained to take so many precautions and suffer cruel suspense. But I can now bear my hapless lot with fortitude, since the most amiable, captivating, and charming being in the universe is the cause of

¹ Wherever square brackets occur the matter is interpolated.

all. For the rest, I will never change unless you compel me. Ah! how happy I should be in your service!—my bliss would be perfect and I should wish for nothing else in the world! These words of mine mean a great deal; I do not know whether you weight them well. If you would graciously deign to answer me two words, I should quite recover, and then be better able to assure you by word of mouth that I am verily your most obedient servant."

Alas! the Princess did not weigh his words well; perhaps she did not grasp their full import, certainly she did not realise to what they must inevitably lead. On Königs-marck's return he seems to have presumed overmuch on the Princess's condescension, for he was ever a bold lover. She treated him with reserve, and took alarm at his temerity and her imprudence.

Königsmarck was only at Hanover a week, and then went off again to Hamburg on a diplomatic mission to the King of Sweden.¹ The Kings of Sweden and Denmark at first had been inclined to join the confederation of the Allies, and sent envoys to the Conference at the Hague; but after the fall of Mons they showed signs of wavering, and were now intriguing with the petty German Courts, with the object of forming what William of Orange called a "Third Party in Europe." Duke Ernest Augustus, already disaffected and leaning towards France, true to his policy of selling to the highest bidder, coquetted with this Third Party, and, without consulta-

¹ "Since my last, July 31, the Count Königs-marck is sent from Hanover with the ratification of the late Treaty to Hamburg, either to carry it to Sweden himself or send it thence."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 4, 1691.

tion with the Dukes of Celle and Wolfenbüttel, he entered on an offensive and defensive treaty with Sweden.

The fact that Königsmarck was despatched on this mission shows that he still stood high in the favour of the Duke of Hanover, who doubtless sent him thinking, as he was a Swede by birth, he would be *persona grata* with the King of Sweden. In this Ernest Augustus was mistaken, for the Swedish monarch loved not absentee nobles, and disapproved of Königsmarck's holding a commission in the Hanoverian service. Later he marked his displeasure in a decided way. Frequent efforts were even now made to induce the Count to quit an alien service and enter that of his native King, and it would have been the right and proper thing for him to do; but there was a magnet at Hanover which drew him thither with a force he could not resist. His passion for Sophie Dorothea had completely mastered him; without her, life was worthless to him, and he was ready to cast away every consideration to remain by her side. While absent on this mission he wrote this letter to the Princess, evidently in answer to a note from her:

“HAMBURG, *July 24.*

“If you had been free from blame you would not have deigned to write at all; yet in spite of the way in which you have treated me, I needs must worship you still. The sorrow and contrition you express have determined me to leave here the day after to-morrow. If you still wish to comfort a poor dejected heart torn by jealousy and love, let me come back. You well know it is probably the only favour I shall ever ask of you, for I hope the good God will take me out of this world rather than let me suffer so. Do not, I implore you, refuse my

prayer, and believe that whatever course you may force me to take I shall never cease to love you.

*Alas! I love my destruction,
And nurse a fire within my breast
Which will speedily consume me.
I am well aware of my perdition,
Because I have aspired to love
Where I should only have worshipped.”¹*

From this it would seem there was a likelihood of Königsmarck's not returning to Hanover at this time, and he had probably threatened to enter the service of the King of Sweden. But, whether by desire of the Princess or not, he came back, and she gave him audience as before. Timid and fearful though she was, she could not resist the temptation of playing with fire,—the very danger lent a zest. But still the Princess held back from committing herself definitely, and her uncertain attitude towards her lover threw him into a tumult of alternative hope and despondency. The state of his mind is expressed in the following letter:

“[HANOVER, undated.]

“I am in the depths of despair at finding so little opportunity of speaking to you. I dare not even admire the eyes that give me life. For pity's sake let me see you alone, that I may say four words—only four small words. Oh! how dearly it costs me to love you! But the joy of speaking to you now and then makes amends for all the pain. I shall go away to-morrow. God knows if I shall ever see you again, my life, my goddess! The thought that we may never meet more is death to me. I

¹ Some lines of German doggerel which can only be rendered thus.

feel ready to plunge a dagger into my heart; but since I must live, I pray that it may be always for you..”

His threat to leave Hanover was not carried out for the “four words” were granted, and the intimacy went on ripening until the end of August, when the Duke of Hanover, attended by his ministers and a numerous suite, went to Brunswick to meet his cousin Antony Ulrich in conference, for Ernest Augustus still remained hostile to the Allies.¹ Königsmarck went in his train, but Sophie Dorothea remained at Hanover. On the journey Königsmarck wrote to the Princess, and again on receiving an answer from her. That the intrigue must have grown during those few weeks is evident from the fact that the cypher agreed upon between them now makes its appearance in the correspondence, and from the bolder and more affectionate tone of his letters. Hitherto he had signed himself *Vôtre esclave* or *Vôtre très-obéissant valet*; now he ends, *Adieux, énable Brune. Je vous embrasse les jenous*. Truly a stride in intimacy.

“[BRUNSWICK], August 20/30.

“No mortal was ever so happy as I when, on arriving here, I found your letter. I am now in your good graces, and am losing all the weak suspicions that tore my heart in twain. Do not doubt my love; God be my witness, I have never loved as I love you. Were you to see me now you would exclaim, ‘Is it possible that any man can be so downcast?’ My dejection is wholly the result of absence from you. My noble travelling companion,² could tell you of the state in which he sees me

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Brunswick, August 28, 1691.

² Probably Prince Ernest Augustus, youngest son of the Duke of Hanover.

daily, though you may be sure that I hide from him the cause. You may not believe it, but on the word of a man of honour, I am often so overcome that I am near swooning away; and yesterday evening, when I was out walking, and thinking of the many days that I must pass before seeing you, I became so agitated that it brought on a palpitation of the heart, and I was obliged to return home. I know not what would have happened had not my servant brought me a cordial, and even then it was a long time before I recovered. Were it not for your dear letter, I should have utterly broken down. Your medicine is excellent for my malady; send me some oftener I am ready to cast at your feet my life, my honour, my future, my fortune. I have forsworn all other women for you; of you doubt this, name any one you would like me to abandon, and I will never speak to her again. *Adieux, étable Brune. La poste pars, il faux finir. Je vous embrasse les jenous.*"¹

The Court returned from Brunswick, Königsmarck in its train, and remained at Hanover through September. Again the Princess became alarmed at the growth of the intimacy; she saw herself on the brink of a precipice, and as she did not want to fall into it, she urged her lover to go away for a time. Königsmarck promised obedience, but fell ill of malarial fever, which he had contracted in the Morea—an illness he did not fail to make the most of. The Princess's sympathies were touched; nothing more was said about his leaving, and during his sickness she even seems to have been so imprudent as to pay him stolen visits at his house by night. It was not difficult. The house where Königsmarck is reputed to have lived in Hanover is in a street

¹ Here and elsewhere the writers are responsible for their French.

hard by the palace. There was a way through the gardens in those days, and under cover of the darkness, disguised, with the help of Knesebeck, the Princess could have avoided notice. Besides, at that time Königsmarck probably had his sister Aurora staying with him, and she could be made the excuse in case of discovery. But, all the same, the risk was considerable. The Princess felt that she had gone too far, for when Königsmarck recovered she again tried to check his ardour. All this is touched upon in the four following letters which Königsmarck wrote to the Princess during this period.

“ [HANOVER, undated.]

“Alas! why do you hold out the hope of letting me see you alone without meaning it? I know you too well: you are not brave enough to venture on such a course, and I do not even ask you, for fear you should expose yourself to danger. You wish we to leave. It is settled my journey begins to-morrow week. You wish it—that is enough. I see, alas! too well that everything is against me. To live in Hanover without your society is impossible. I would rather go and plough the earth than stay here under such conditions. Oh! if I could only crawl away and die quietly sowewhere! But, after all, nothing matters. I can no longer hope for happiness. My Intimate,¹ takes tolerable care to keep us apart, and, for him to succeed, you have only to give credence to all he may tell you. I hope, however, that the love you seem to bear me will hinder you from being deceived. If you wish to do me a favour, let me know with whom you talk at Court; it is not from jealousy that I ask, only from interest. If you answer this the same messenger will be waiting to receive your letter, at the

¹ Prince Ernest Augustus.

same spot. Comfort me, I implore you, for I suffer much for love of you. If by chance you should play [cards] in the Grand Hall, my man, for fear of being seen, will be waiting in the gallery leading to your apartments." ¹

"You have laid down a law which it will be hard for me to keep—to be all day long without seeing you, but, since you wish it, I must obey. I hope, however, that you will let me wait on you in your apartments this evening. If you cannot manage this, will you meet me to-night at my house? Let me know your decision. Should you decide on the latter course, you will find no one at my place; the door will be open, so come in boldly and without fear. I am dying of impatience to see you. Answer me soon that I may know what to do. Farewell, dear heart."

"Nothing could have comforted me more in my sickness than your sweet letter, I find it full of tenderness. I am sorry you have found the time so tedious. I suffer from the same misfortune, and have no chance of being happier to-day unless you wish to play. If my fever be not too great, I will pass under your windows in the hope of seeing you. You will not refuse me this grace; you know the sight of you will be a soothing balm in my sickness; a visit from you would be an infallible remedy. You speak to me of *passion*. Alas! it is for me to speak of it—mine is so great that it will consume me utterly at last. Oh! my dear, my dear! do you think that you love

¹ This letter is ornamented with a seal. The device represents an altar, on which burns a heart; a hand pours out some oil, and on the top is to be seen the sun; at the foot, a motto, which may be translated, "Nothing impure lights me." Beneath the seal may be seen the ends of a green silk ribbon.

with as much passion as I love? . . . It is cruelly hard for me not to be with you always—I am compelled to keep away from you, God knows with what grief. The Count de Reuss,¹ prevents me from ending my letter as I would.”

“Of a truth I was ill pleased with the cold airs you treated me to yesterday, and I spent the night most miserably. I was in great sorrow and fain to weep, and all these emotions made me very feverish for nearly three hours. I vow, my divine beauty, that I never remember having been in such a pitiful plight before. ‘Alas!’ I cried, ‘God burns me with sickness, and gives me no comfort, for He freezes the heart of my divinity, and life is intolerable.’ I threw myself on my knees, tears in my eyes, and prayed that if it were true that you loved me no longer, I might die. . . . I cannot tell you, therefore, the joy your letter gave me. I kissed it time and again. I hate myself for having thought you guilty of inconstancy; I cast myself at your feet, praying pardon, and I promise never to be so ready to believe things again.

“I am awaiting Her Highness’s commands.² When you give me leave I shall fly to you; and if I am not wanted, I shall show that I cannot attach myself to any one else, for I shall take the first mail coach to join my regiment. I hope that in time Fortune will get tired of persecuting me so cruelly, and Fate will be in my favour; but whatever misfortunes may befall, I shall bear them with joy so long as the heart I adore remains

¹ The Count de Reuss was the uncle by marriage of Sophie Dorothea; he had married Angelica d’Olbreuse, sister of the Duchess of Celle.

² *I.e.* the commands of the Princess.

constant to me. My happiness and fortune are there, my ambition is bounded there. For pity's sake believe me faithful. To convince you the better how I love you, how I worship you, I sign this with my blood. Whilst you love me, you will be worshipped by

“KONIGSMARCK.

“(Written in blood.)”

Duke Ernest Augustus was now setting out on an autumn visit to the Duke of Celle at his hunting seats of Epsdorff and Göhre.¹ The Duke of Celle was much keener on the chase than on affairs of State. Every autumn he went to Epsdorff, a village some eight miles from Hamburg, where he had a schloss, to hunt the stag and the wild boar; and then to Göhre, a remote spot some fifty miles from Celle. He took his Duchess and his Court with him; and this year he combined pleasure with business, for he invited the Duke of Hanover and Duke Antony Ulrich to hunt with him by day and discuss the affairs of State in the evening. The result of this visit was that the Duke of Hanover was persuaded to take up a neutral, and no longer hostile, attitude towards William of Orange.

Princess Sophie Dorothea was setting out for Epsdorff with her father-in-law, but the day before starting she was taken ill. Königsmarck at first hoped that the indisposition was feigned, in order to avoid her departure from Hanover and from him.

“Alas!” he laments, “we shall never be happy. No sooner do I recover from sickness than my adored one sinks under it. I suffered in mine, but yours makes me suffer a great deal more; it hurt me so much to see you in pain that I wished myself a hundred miles away.

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, October, 1691, Epsdorff.

You will say that was not very kind, but I could not bear to see you in such agony. If perchance your illness were not so grave as it seems, it would be a little comfort, for I might think you were pretending, for love of me."

He quickly found that she was not pretending, and as soon as she recovered the Princess went to Epsdorff and then to Gohre. Königsmarck suggested that he should go to Hamburg, which was near the latter place, so that he might see something of the Princess; but she wisely begged him not to go, and he went to spend the period of absence with his regiment, which was quartered near Hanover. A little later he writes:

"[FROM THE CAMP, undated.]

"I have been hoping to receive one line from your charming hand. Can it be, after all you told me, that I am quite forgotten? I cannot believe it. I will pardon you this time, but have pity. Without an assurance of your love I cannot live. . . . I will not go to Hamburg. I take Heaven for my witness that since you have been away from me I have not spent an hour without thinking of you, without picturing your charms. I delight in doing so; it nourishes my poor heart crushed with sadness. Why cannot I take wings like my desire? I should this moment be in your lovely arms, tasting the sweet delights of your lips. . . . I have already brushed away the thing asked of me, and I hope to succeed, but, remember, it is for the love of you that I am giving everything up.¹ I am shut up here in my room without seeing any one; I scarcely ever leave it. I am away

¹ Probably he refers to an appointment offered him by the King of Sweden.

with my thoughts, far away from the earth. If by chance an officer wants to speak to me concerning the regiment, I am furious at losing so much time without thinking of you. I hope after all these assurances you will not ask me again whether I love you. If you still doubt it will kill me. But I must tell you that I have a consolation here, close to me; not a pretty girl but a bear, which I feed. If you should fail me I will bare my chest and let him tear my heart out. I am teaching him that trick with sheep and calves, and he doesn't manage it badly. If ever I have need of him—God help me! I shall not suffer long."

During this separation Königsmarck addressed other letters to the Princess in a similar strain, full of extravagant expressions of passion. It is not necessary to quote them, because they are, in the main, a repetition of what has gone before. The Princess apparently answered some of the letters, but she was chary of writing to him from Epsdorff, for, in spite of all the caution observed, the intrigue had begun to excite suspicion. It was mentioned to the Duchess of Celle, and she took the opportunity of her daughter's visit to remonstrate with her, and to implore her to avoid further communication with Königsmarck. The warnings of her mother, who dearly loved her, aroused the Princess to a sense of peril. She made another effort to draw back. When she returned to Hanover, she wrote to Königsmarck urging him to marry, as the only way of freeing them both from the dangers that threatened them. Her letter called forth the following remonstrance:

“[HANOVER, undated.]

“Alas! the miserable day has dawned that I have feared so much. I must marry, since you wish it; it shall be

done. I will obey your wishes; it is enough that you will have it so. My death-sentence is subscribed by the hand I adore. I confess I should never have expected to see so dreadful a sentence passed on me by you. But of what am I complaining? I must remember that I have loved you, and I ought to have known the sex better than to believe all you vowed to me. Alas! I was weak and believed it; I must now be firm enough to support the consequences. Your cruelty goes too far, for, unless you wished to wound me, you could never have treated me thus. Why has not God given you a heart less cruel and me a heart less tender?—we should agree better then. I have never been but yours; I wanted to be so all my life,¹ but you do not regard my constancy. . . . You wish me to marry to save myself from destruction, but you do not reflect that marriage would surely bring about my ruin. There are two ways of escape from this dilemma. The first, and the more agreeable to me, is for you not to suffer me to marry; and if my ruin follows, as I foresee, not to forsake me. The second will be easier for you. It is to let me marry, and swear to me on your oath that you will always cherish the affection you have seemed to show me. I will wait until your answer comes, which I hope to receive from your hand (not disguised, if you please);² and I mean to regulate my conduct accordingly, so that I may have nothing to reproach myself with. But you love me no longer—your head has triumphed over your heart; and it is not even enough that you love me no longer, you wish me to love you no more. What a hard thing! How will it be possible for me to obey? No,

¹ A reference to their early friendship.

² This is a reference to the fact that most of the Princess's letters to him at this time were dictated by her only, and actually written by Knesebeck (*La Confidente*) to disarm suspicion.

Madame, in spite of all, I shall always adore you; my love will be extinguished only with my life. Pray believe this from your most humble and affectionate servant."

Sophie Dorothea was by nature weak in judgment, strong in passion. She could not sit down and pen the sentence of what she supposed must be lifelong wretchedness to her lover, and urge him to marry while his heart was still wholly devoted to her. She had neither the courage nor the firmness to insist on separation; in fact, until she came face to face with the alternative of giving him up for ever, she had not realised how much she loved him nor how great an influence he had gained over her. So the marriage scheme was dropped. She wrote him to the effect that she could not help loving him, but he must restrain himself and be more prudent in the future. She was rewarded by an ecstatic reply:

"I am the happiest man in the world. If it be true that you love me as you say, and your love will last always, where is the bliss to equal mine? I fear my joy will be too apparent, that every one will see in my eyes it can only emanate from you. I will restrain myself as much as I can; but 'when the heart is so proud the eyes play the traitor.' Your eyes, more than I dared hope, declared to me last evening the feelings of your heart. I am so overjoyed that I am hardly able to express myself. I hope to tell you this evening all I am not writing."

It was now the autumn. Military operations in Flanders had reopened in the summer, but the campaign of 1691 had been more or less of a farce. The two armies, that of William and that of Louis, had marched and

countermarched, advanced and retreated, without coming to an engagement, and after having thus performed a stately minuet for some months, both armies retired to winter quarters. The Brunswick prince took no part in the campaign, and all this time Prince George Louis, who was very friendly with William, had been sulking over his enforced inaction at home. In October he was seized with a serious attack of measles.¹ His illness aroused the slumbering sympathies of his wife, and she nursed him towards recovery; doubtless she felt that such conduct was the best answer to the malicious tales of her enemies. Königsmarck was thrown into despair on hearing of the improved relations between Sophie Dorothea and her husband, for his passion for her was very virile and very selfish. He addressed to her this jealous protest:

“With what grief I hear that you have been in other arms than mine! I cannot express what I feel, but it must be so, I suppose; at least, you suffer it with regret, and take care to tell me. I confess I should never have enough power over myself to endure the embraces of a person I did not love; I would rather see all the Furies than an object I detested. However, your promises reassure me of your affection, and give me comfort; without that small consolation I should be miserable indeed. I adore and love you to distraction, yet I must not see you! Are there any torments like this in hell? But I can endure the anguish by remembering my martyrdom is through you, and it is for love of you I suffer: you are well worth the pain. I am wrong to be so disturbed since you assure me of your love. ‘What will assure me of your constancy?’ Your conduct is the

¹Colt's *Despatch*, October 9/19, 1691.

guarantee I ask of you. It is superfluous for me to make new protestations of love and faithfulness, for I have given you solid and convincing proofs; but if, haply, you will not believe these, believe the vows I made you and am ready to make at any time."

Despite this letter, the illness of the Prince made the Princess more friendly with her husband, and this friendliness was accompanied by a coldness on her part towards Königsmarck. When he remonstrated she excused herself on the ground that he had shown her indifference. This called forth the following:

"If I had behaved like you I might be accused of indifference, but when sorrow wears me to a shadow you are cruel to thus accuse me. All the Court is asking me what ails me; they think my face as haggard as if I were recovering from a serious illness. I have been obliged to pretend that I fell downstairs; but many will not believe this excuse. Let them think what they please, so long as they do not suspect that the true cause of my illness arises from your injustice and disdainful airs. Do you think me the man to easily condone such conduct? If so, you are mistaken. I would rather go off to the Indies than be treated in this way. If our love were a little fashionable gallantry, well and good; I should accommodate myself to your moods, and quarrel with you almost every day, but I treat our affair more seriously, and therefore I cannot possibly submit to your coldness. Did I not beg of you, for God's sake, to tell me what ailed you? But I could get nothing from you except, 'Leave me in peace.' I answered, 'No, I will know at any cost.' You then had the courtesy to say 'Get you gone.' I went at once, with a firm resolution not to

appear before you again unless you positively ordered me. That is why I have not seen you this evening."

The rest of the letter contains requests that he might know how he stood with the Princess, so that he might shape his course accordingly. He was beside himself with jealousy. He could not believe that she had any compassion for her husband, and persisted in looking for the cause of her coldness elsewhere. Especially he resented her attending the opera and taking part in sledge-parties to which he was not invited, and he wrote to Knesebeck complaining bitterly of the Princess's treatment.

The Princess so far relented as to receive from her lover two letters expressing grateful delight at change of her conduct; but his delight apparently was not unalloyed. When Prince George Louis was better, the Princess left to visit the Duke and Duchess of Celle at Wienhausen,¹ another country place of the Duke's a short distance from Celle. From Wienhausen she went to Celle, whither Königsmarck followed her, greatly daring. The Duchess of Celle, who had learned that Königsmarck had neither married nor gone away, and things were apparently much as before, again remonstrated with her daughter, and urged her to break with him definitely. The Duchess did not dream there was anything more than a passing fancy, a little imprudence; but she reminded her daughter that she was surrounded by enemies who would seize on any pretext to encompass her ruin. The Princess saw the force of her mother's reasoning. She had not yet reached that point of passion which takes no count of consequences; but Königsmarck had reached it, and compromise seemed impossible. She

¹Colt's *Despatch*, November 19, 1691.

implored her lover to leave her, at any rate for a time. Seeming to acquiesce, he wrote:

“[CELLE, undated.]

“I see nothing but ruin before my eyes, but I hope to avert it by a glorious death, which I will seek all over the earth. It is the only thing to pray for now: for since I may not live with you, I will not live at all. I am very grateful to you for undeceiving me about your coolness. You give me back life by assuring me that all they tell you does not turn you against me. . . . I have had a letter from a friend who is in the same state as myself,—that is why he is going to the Morea.¹ If Fortune does not change, I shall go on that expedition with him, and, I hope, never return. Perchance you may be kind enough to have a memorial erected for me; if so, do not forget to inscribe on it that I welcomed death with joy, because I was forbidden to look into your beautiful eyes. Ah, Madame! how you make me suffer! Are these the delights of love?

*Amour vois les mos que tu fais
Aux où les biens que tus promes
Natus pas pitié de ma peine ?²*

When wilt thou have pity? When shall I overcome thy coldness? Wilt thou ever keep from me the rapture of tasting perfect joy? I seek it in thy arms; and if I may not taste it there, I care for naught else. No! if I may not be happy with you, I will not be happy at all. If fortune were to destine me to a kingdom, I would not care for it without you. On the contrary, if I desire any—

¹ Troops were being sent to the Morea at this time, and Prince Christian, son of the Duke of Hanover, wished to go with them. He did not go.—*Vide* Colt's despatches.

² This is a literal rendering of Königsmarck's French.

thing for myself, to win renown, to push myself to great estate, it is only for the love of you and in the hope that you may love me more, for an insignificant lover without high employment cannot hope to be long in the good graces of a lady of your rank. If God spare my life I vow I will remain a constant lover, and advance in dignity and honour. You see, Madame, I have a good opinion of myself. Know this: when one wishes to climb for the love of the lovely one, one succeeds or one sinks utterly; it will be one or the other with me. My resolve to leave you is not consistent with such tender love, I admit; but you suffer too much on my account. I should be the cruellest man on earth were I not to go away, and so give you a little relief from the persecution you are suffering; for when my enemies see me no longer happy, they will cease from tattling. But will absence injure me with you? Are you a woman who can still love without seeing the loved one? Will my envious enemies succeed in their infamous designs? Will you forsake me?"

The Princess was so much frightened at the thought that her lover was going on another perilous campaign in the Morea, where he had narrowly escaped death the year before, and where Prince Charles was slain, that she recalled her words and wrote begging him to stay. Königsmarck at once seized the advantage he had gained; he became bolder and more definite in his demands. For every inch the Princess yielded he took an ell. He answered:

"You know only too well that I should not go away except on your account, and since you ask me to stay I will do so with joy. My greatest delight is to pay you my court. But, Madame, you are unjust to imagine I

love you no longer. Is it for people we do not love that we change our moods and plans? Is it because I do not love you I suffer no end of humiliation, anxiety, and sorrow? I am not so unjust as you; I like to believe that you love me. There are many men who would not believe all you say took place, but for myself I set such store on everything you tell me that I believe it like the Gospel. Rest assured that my love is above all things. I see you in so tender a mood that I cannot find words to thank you enough, though I fear you are willing to let me continue in misery, even though you no longer fear your parents' preachments. You are too charming, my divine Princess. I am so touched that I rule myself wholly according to your will. I would leave my head on the scaffold rather than neglect anything you may wish me to do. I had very little opportunity of speaking to you yesterday, yet I was much relieved, for the only sign I received, though given in haste, reassured me so much that I slept soundly. It is the first time I have slept since I came to Celle. . . . Commune with your heart: if it be true to me, it will encourage you to do something bold. Courage, Madame; see me for once—no more—half a quarter of an hour. I wish to thank you on my knees for your constancy. It is the only thing I ask you. But do not risk anything for me; it might spoil all. It is better to suffer a little while than always."

That his prayer was granted may be gathered from the following:

"The moments seem to me centuries. I cannot watch the daylight without raging. Why do not the hours shut up into moments? What would I not give for

twelve o'clock to strike? Be sure to have ready *de l'eau de la reine d'Hongrie* for fear my rapture may make me swoon away. What! I shall embrace to-night the loveliest of women. I shall kiss her charming mouth. I shall worship her eyes, those eyes that enslave me. I shall hear from her very lips that she loves me. I shall have the joy of embracing her knees; my tears will chase down her incomparable cheeks. I shall hold in my arms the most beautiful body in the world. Verily, Madame, I shall die of joy. But so long as I have time to tell thee that I die thy slave, I care for naught beside."

CHAPTER XIII

CROSSING THE RUBICON

(1692)

Bist du mein ?
Hab' ich dich wieder ?
Darf ich dich fassen ?
Kann ich mir trauen ?
Endlich ! Endlich !

Art thou mine ?
Do I behold the ?
Do I embrace thee ?
Can I believe it ?
At last ! At last !

Tristan und Isolde.

WHILE the Princess was still at Celle an event happened at Hanover, which created much excitement. Colt writes: "The gates have been shut for two days at Hanover, accompanied with a great consternation. Yet first the two Moltkes were brought to Court under a guard, where they are kept close, and all their papers taken. One is Jagermaster,¹ and hath been employed in the business with the Duke of Saxe-Gotha; and the other was Lieutenant-Colonel, and had waited upon the Prince Max; and there is also secured a secretary to the Duke of Wolfenbüttel, who formerly served Prince Augustus, the Duke's second son, who was killed in Transylvania. And next day Prince Max was secured under guard in his chamber, none of his

¹ Grand Master of the Hunt.

servants being suffered to come near him; but the Duchess, who is under great affliction, and the Duke said publicly that there were designs against his person and Government, and many storeys are dispersed about.”¹

The story circulated by authority was that Count Moltke, who was in waiting on the Duke, had presented a snuff-box to His Highness when he was playing at quadrille. The Duke, suspecting something wrong, asked the Count to take his cards for a moment, and going into the adjoining room gave a pinch of the snuff to a pet spaniel, with the result that the dog immediately expired. When he had given some hurried orders, the Duke returned to the card-table, and presently told Count Moltke that some one was waiting for him without. When the Count went out of the room, he found himself a prisoner, and his arrest was followed by that of his brother, the Wolfenbüttel secretary, and Prince Maximilian.

This was the rumour industriously spread abroad; but it was not correct. Moltke had made no attempt against the life of his sovereign; but he had undoubtedly plotted against his authority. The old question of the union of the Dukedoms of Celle and Hanover, and the settling of all territory on Prince George Louis to the exclusion of his younger brothers, had cropped up again. This was the Duke of Hanover's darling scheme, a necessary step towards the coveted Electorate, and he would allow nothing to come between him and his ambition. The younger princes stoutly opposed it and rebelled. The Duke of Wolfenbüttel secretly abetted them, because primogeniture would add largely to the future aggrandisement of Hanover, and even the Duchess Sophia regarded the plan with dislike, as it pressed so hardly on her younger sons.

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, December 8, 1691.

Prince Augustus being dead, it now fell on Prince Max, the third son, to rebel, and Count Moltke and his brother aided and abetted him. The Wolfenbüttel secretary was also implicated; the plot was almost ripe, and a rising was planned, when the conspirators were betrayed by a double traitor, who had wormed himself into their confidence by pretending to be their friend. An outbreak of the populace was feared, for the people's sympathies were with the young princes in their resistance to this innovation, and Prince George Louis was unpopular.

The Duke of Hanover's resentment was very great, especially against his cousins of Wolfenbüttel, with whom all relations were abruptly broken off. Prince Max continuing mutinous, and, vowing he would never submit, was kept a closer prisoner than ever; his guards were doubled and his mother forbidden to go near him. Indeed, she herself was suspected and examined before the Council. It has been said that the Princess Sophie Dorothea was implicated too, and Moltke was offered his liberty if he would confess her share in the business, but he refused and denied. The suggestion was probably made at the instigation of the Countess Platen, who would start any lie against the Princess. There is no authority for the statement; Colt in his long account of the affair does not even mention the Princess's name. She was at Celle at the time the plot was discovered, and both the Duke and Duchess of Celle were in favour of the ultimate settlement by primogeniture of the dukedoms on Prince George Louis, seeing that he had wedded their daughter, and the children were their only descendants.

The Princess and her children came back to Hanover with her parents early in January for the carnival. "The Court of Celle arrived here last night," writes Colt, "and were received with extra kindness, much different to

what I have seen since I have been in these parts, and they seem to bind all their thoughts to secure the union of these two dukedoms.”¹ And again: “The Court of Celle will continue here for some time, and the Duke and Duchess of Celle shew an extraordinary fondness for their daughter and grandchildren.”²

By this time Prince Max had been sent away as a prisoner to the Castle of Hamelin, and after a good deal of blustering had promised to submit to paternal authority under certain conditions. Further inquiries revealed that the plot was an old one and had many branches. Duke Antony Ulrich had been the moving power, and both the dead princes, Augustus and Charles, were inculpated. The feeling at the Hanoverian Court ran strongly against Duke Antony Ulrich, and even the Duchess Sophia found herself exposed to resentment, though nothing could be proved against her, poor lady, beyond that, having a mother's heart, she had helped her unruly sons now and then out of her slender pin money (not that she had much to give—Countess Platen saw to that), when their father had cast them out with the proverbial shilling. It must have been a sore time for the proud, high-spirited Duchess. To add a spice more of bitterness to her cup, the Duchess of Celle was now at Hanover, a witness of the humiliation of her rival, and herself flattered and courted. It may be doubted if Eléonore had sufficient magnanimity not to vaunt her triumph; yet she would have done well to be humble in the days of her prosperity, for even at this, its apogee, there was a far more dangerous intrigue than any Prince Max was involved in, secretly but surely undermining her future happiness, and threatening to bring disaster

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 5, 1692.

² *Ibid.*, January 8, 1692.

on her cherished schemes and ruin and dishonour on all most dear to her.

But whatever misery and wretchedness lay behind the scenes, externally the Court of Hanover was as gay and brilliant as ever. The New Year opened as usual with the carnival, an Italian opera, and a series of festivities, in which all took part, from the Court down to the common people. The taverns were thronged with mummers and masqueraders, the streets of the old town were bright with booths and bunting, and a large concourse of merry-makers flocked to Hanover from the surrounding towns and villages. The nobility came from their country estates, and many of the neighbouring princes and princesses came for the carnival too. In all these festivities Sophie Dorothea was the central figure. Every one paid court to the beautiful young Princess of Hanover, who, high in the favour of her parents and the Duke of Hanover, triumphed for the moment over her enemies and seemed to gather up in herself and her children all the brilliant hopes of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

The children formed the strong link of the alliance between Celle and Hanover. Even the Duchess of Celle had come to see that, however much in her heart she might dislike the Duchess Sophia and the Hanoverian influence, henceforth their interests were to a great extent identical. The young Prince George Augustus was now nine, the little Princess Sophie Dorothea five; they were her grandchildren and the representatives of the fast accumulating dignities of the House. The future union of the dukedoms was settled, the Electorate of Hanover was almost assured, the Crown of England, now that William and Mary had ascended the throne, no longer a mere mirage. Who could tell to what brilliant future these children might not be destined? Her

descendants—the descendants of the hated and despised Eléonore—the “Frenchwoman,” the “*canaille*,” the “little clot of dirt”—might live to ascend the mightiest thrones of Europe.¹ These considerations might well give Duchess Eléonore pause, and make her watch closely the conduct of her daughter, lest by folly or indiscretion she might blight her career and injure the prospects of her children. She again spoke to the Princess and urged her to avoid Königsmarck. The Princess-Dowager of East Friesland, who, with her daughter-in-law, had come to Hanover (ostensibly for the carnival, in reality to try to smooth things down between the Dukes of Hanover and Wolfenbüttel), also repeated certain rumours she had heard to the Duchess of Celle, who in turn communicated them to her daughter. The Princess was frightened, and directed Knesebeck to tell Königs-marck of what had passed, and to impress on him the need of greater caution in the future. Königsmarck wrote:

“[HANOVER, *February.*]

“I am extremely surprised to learn from La Confidente all that has happened. As I had heard nothing from you, I was in despair; but when your letter came it was so loving that I will not hint at what I feared most. I again picked up a little courage. What worries me most is that your mother has been preaching at you; for though she may be on your side she is sure to watch you closely, and when she learns that you have been talking to me she will become more suspicious, and I fear will tell everything to the Duke. Try to prevent that, or we are lost for ever. I am grieved to be the cause of all this

¹ As, in point of fact, they did, George Augustus as George II, of Great Britain; Sophie Dorothea as Queen of Prussia, and mother of Frederick the Great.

trouble. But you are so sweet and charming, it is not my fault; you must blame yourself for having made in me such an unlucky choice. It is cruel to think that while everybody can make love to you, and you can speak to whom you will without any fault-finding, I am the only one excluded. When I think how your mother encourages Monsieur Welling,¹ on the one hand, and on the other forbids me to speak to you, I am so enraged that I could stab her, and I wish her a thousand times a day to the devil. If the earth were to open and swallow her and the Dowager² up, how glad I should be! I believe all the fiends plot together to annoy me, but they will not succeed if only you remain faithful. I can patiently endure all things so long as you do not change, but I fear they will terrify you so that in the end they will succeed in their diabolical plans. How I hate them! Were I lord of the thunderbolts there would be many grey heads battered about; but as I am not, I can only implore you to hate all those who are working against me, and urging you to forget me. You will not refuse this prayer if you have any love left for me. If you wish, I will go away to some village near, for I cannot veil my eyes so that the world does not see my adoration; but if you will suffer me even to look at you, you will give me joy,—without that I cannot stay. Be merciful and write to me. Forget not to assure me of your love, for now is the time; if your heart begins to cool, the plotters will succeed in their infamous designs.

“Now as to reproaches. You might have spoken to me

¹ “Baron Welling is come hither to prepare matters.”—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January, 1692.

² The Princess-Dowager of East Friesland. “The two Princesses of East Frise [Friesland] arrived yesterday.”—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, February 9, 1692.

coming out of the Princess's¹ door, for your father had already retired, and there would have been no danger on account of the Prince. But terror prevented you; I know you so well. I have everything to fear; every one plots against me, men and demons, and even old women, who are worse than demons."

The Princess was torn by conflicting emotions—her infatuation on the one hand, and her dread of discovery on the other. She had not yet capitulated wholly; but under the impetuous assaults of her lover the outworks were falling one by one, the citadel would soon be stormed. While she was hesitating, the carnival broke up and Sophie Dorothea returned with her parents to Celle. The Duchess Sophia seems to have gone too.²

The Duke of Hanover had an object in sending "all the women" out of the way, for he wished to try his prisoners and bring Prince Max to his knees—things he could do better when freed from feminine influence. He soon succeeded, for Prince Max renounced all, and the prisoners were found guilty and sent back to their prison to wait sentence. The Duke of Hanover then went to join his brother at Celle, where much company were assembled, including the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach. Königsmarck was there too, perhaps in the suite of the Duke of Hanover, possibly on a visit to his brother-in-law, Count Lewenhaupt, to whom the Duke of Celle had recently given the command of a regiment of Foot.³

¹ The Princess of East Friesland.

² "The Duke of Hanover hath sent all the women hither."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, February 23, 1692.

³ "The Duke of Celle hath at last given the new-raised regiment of Foot to the Count Lewenhaupt, a Swede, brother-in-law to Count Königsmarck, who commands a regiment of Hanover."—Colt's *Despatch*, January 22, 1692.

Königsmarck was, of course, invited to all the Court festivities at Celle, and had many opportunities of meeting the Princess. But she was on her guard in public, so much so that the Duchess of Celle could detect nothing definite, though she seems to have sounded Königsmarck, if we may judge from his next letter to the Princess. In this letter appears the first hint of an idea which gradually matured in the Princess's mind side by side with the growth of her passion—namely that she and her lover should escape by flight from a situation intolerable to both.

“[CELLE, *March.*]

“La Confidente will tell you that I was more than satisfied yesterday though I had no other delight than pressing your hand. Our restraint has its charms, for though the last few days I have seen you only in places where even the language of the eyes is scarcely possible, I have had many happy moments. What a delight, *ma petite*, for us to be able to communicate with impunity in the presence of thousands of people! What a delight! Speak to me a little more in the same way, but only when there is no risk, for I should be sore distressed to cause you more trouble than I do already. . . . Keep in the same mind as you were yesterday, and though the whole world conspire against us, never mind so long as we love one another. They will soon tire of preaching at you, and then we shall enjoy perfect peace. I have not yet seen Aurora, but I shall know all from her. I have had a long conversation with the Duchess of Celle. I believe her to be the most deceitful of women. She says the prettiest things to me, yet all the time she is doing her best to ruin me with you. I hope to Heaven she will not succeed! Do not believe all these women

may tell you, for they will make every effort to set you against me. But I should be wrong to doubt you *after the proposition you made to me—that you are willing to leave all this pomp and splendour and retire with me to some corner of the world.* After that I have nothing to fear. I accept your offer with joy. You have only to say the word and I am ready. If the result of your parents' persecution be to force you to take such a step, I hope they will persecute you a hundred times more, so that you may act promptly. Why should we not fly to-night?

"Surely, Madame, my manner towards the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach¹ must have shown you that my heart is all yours, and no other beauty can find place there, not even that princess. I hope you have no cause to complain of my behaviour to the other ladies here. It is true I flattered His Highness's mistress,² in the hope she would tell me what she was about, but she would not say anything. I stand well with Monseigneur,³ and he shows me more courtesy than usual."

The Princess, during the next few days at Celle, seems to have behaved with more circumspection. In this she was only obeying the dictates of common prudence. Nevertheless her precautions called forth the following remonstrances:—

"I imagined that in possessing your love I should be the happiest man in the world. I little thought I should have so few opportunities of speaking to you. I tell you

¹ "The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach are come hither."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, March 4, 1692.

² Countess Platen.

³ Duke of Celle.

frankly this continual restraint falls far short of perfect felicity, and my happiness will never be complete until I enter upon it wholly. Believe me, this is true. I was speaking to La Confidente about it last night; she will tell you my wishes anon. I have to talk to you just like every one else, and precautions have to be taken, though they wound and vex us. Let us hope for better times, for until then we are doomed to suffer. Meanwhile forget nothing that will give me comfort, and assure me of your tender love; you cannot do this better than in letting me see you as often as possible. Did you really notice how the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach attacked me? I hope when I have answered her two or three times as curtly as possible, she will clearly understand that I want no intercourse with her."

"Your kind note assures me of your tender love; and assurances must suffice for the present. But, Madame, I am not the man to let myself be made sport of, and if your promises do not agree with your conduct they will not make the slightest impression on me. You have not treated me very well the last two days, and I cannot quite believe your notes; but if you change your manners, I am quite ready to accept your protestations. I am forced to assume an extremely distant manner towards you, and it makes me furious; I wish you could alter it, but you cannot. Pardon me once more. It is my hot temper—I know it, but you are the cause."

Königsmarck's "hot temper" seems to have led him into a breach of good manners, for later we find him writing:

"If you could see my despair you would forgive me the

fault I have just committed. I was piqued and annoyed because you would not deign to look at me once during the play, though I sat immediately opposite. I do not deserve your haughty airs; the sacrifice I have made for you of the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach¹ at least deserved a glance. You can see for yourself that I hardly look at her, and when she speaks to me I answer her very briefly, so as to cut short any further conversation. Her lady-in-waiting says that the Duchess finds me much changed. But a truce to all that; it is not worth speaking about. Give me pardon, Princess, I implore you, and arrange for me to see you to-morrow. I could hardly get a glimpse of you, for the dancing made me very hot, and, as I was unable to change my linen, I did not like to come near you. This is a poor excuse, and I can only throw myself upon your mercy. La Confidente will intercede for me. I hovered outside your apartments for half an hour to see if La Confidente were coming out. I wanted to knock at your back door, but I dared not. What torment for me to miss the society of my adored one! What a night I shall spend! *Grand Dieu!* what was I thinking about? What demon possessed me? If you will not forgive me you will drive me to despair. I shall go away at once and weep over my sins in the regiment, so let me know my fate. Farewell, my dearest one. Shall I dare to call you so again? Verily I do not deserve that privilege. I am in torment. When will you send me an answer? For the love of Heaven, let me have one soon."

The Princess forgave him, probably on the morrow,

¹ "The Courts of Hanover and Saxe-Eisenach go from hence after to-morrow; there has been much company here for several days."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, March 8, 1692.

and how fully may be gathered from the following rapturous epistle:

"I slept like a king, and I hope you did the same. What joy! what rapture! what enchantment have I not tasted in your sweet arms! Ye gods! what a night I spent! The memory of it blots out all my troubles, and for the moment I count myself the happiest man on earth. You see, it rests wholly with you to make me happy, and when I am sad you are the cause. Adieu, dear heart. How long the day will seem to me without seeing you! Adieu."

And he wrote later the same day.

"Verily I am overwhelmed by the tokens of love you have vouchsafed to me. I shall never be able to show you my gratitude, but shall always be your debtor. I love and I am loved. Is there any bliss approaching mine? I count myself the happiest of mortals, and even of the gods. Ah! most beautiful one! The tenderness you have shown me compels me to love you, and makes me despise the favours of good and the caprices of bad fortune. Time will bring no change in my love. I would abandon for you all ties—family, relations, women, even wife and children had I any. My passion intoxicates me. I can no longer think—words fail. I commit myself to your keeping; do with me as you will. I can scarcely keep my heart within bounds; it strives perpetually to burst away and thank you for its captivity, for it loves to be the slave of one who treats it so generously. I fear I shall lose it altogether, but as I cannot live without a heart, for pity's sake, Madame, give me yours in return, for without one or the other I shall die.

Do not put off my seeing you this evening, I beseech you. You have convinced me so deeply that you love me, that I have never loved you so much before. You have never appeared to me so altogether lovely. With crossed hands and bended knees I thank you for all you have vouchsafed unto me. Suffer me therefore to see you again to-day, and do not put me off. I should die.

"The Prince went away to-day at eight o'clock. He is angry because you wished to remain with your mother. All goes wonderfully well. Farewell."

On the return of the Court to Hanover, Duke Ernest Augustus concentrated his energies on obtaining the long-deferred Electorate, and he made the electoral bonnet a positive condition to his rejoining the Allies. William of Orange was already at the Hague, busily making arrangements for the forthcoming campaign of 1692. He found that Denmark and Sweden threatened to become actively hostile. Brandenburg was sullen, and Saxony disaffected. He could therefore ill afford to lose the services of the Duke of Hanover, and had again to promise him his support and influence with the Emperor for the Electorate. But Ernest Augustus wanted something more than promises. "This Duke," writes Colt, "is certainly resolved to make all things as sure as he can with the Emperor before he lets his troops stir out of the country."¹ The Duke of Celle, who was warmly on the side of the Allies, generously waived his claim as elder brother to the Electorate, seeing that his younger brother could be gained on no other terms. But still the Emperor hesitated. He knew that the French agent was at Hanover, and intrigues were on foot with Den-

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, April 15, 1692.

mark and Sweden, and he stipulated that the Duke should first declare against France. As neither side trusted the other, negotiations did not advance very quickly.

In the meantime Königsmarck went on one of his frequent journeys to Hamburg, ostensibly to visit his estate hard by, probably to combine pleasure with his business. Hamburg was then a strongly fortified town much frequented by the princes of northern Germany. Some ten years previously the first theatre in Germany for operas was opened at Hamburg, and this helped to make it a favourite resort of the gay world. Just at this time it gained a special importance, as it was the meeting-place of many of the representatives of the great Alliance, including several German princes and the disaffected northern Powers who came thither to intrigue concerning the coming campaign. Königsmarck's visit might possibly have had something of a diplomatic nature, but no hint of this appears in his letters. His relations with the Princess had continued in unbroken harmony, if we may judge from the little note he sent her on the eve of his leaving:

“[HANOVER: undated.]

“I should deem myself all unworthy of your love were I to go away without assuring you how deeply I am sensible of your kindness. Yes, beautiful mouth, you love me, I doubt no longer, and my bliss is perfect. I start with that belief only. . . . The letter inclosed from Hamburg will show how things are going with my sister. I will write you more fully. I kiss your hands. I am all yours.”

The ensuing letters which he wrote to the Princess when on this journey explain themselves:

"HAMBURG, *March 22.*

"I have reached here at last, after great trouble and danger, for about a league from Hanover my carriage broke down, and in crossing the Elbe I thought I should have been drowned. My servants had taken lodgings at the inn to which I usually come, and to crown all, I found that the Princess d'Otfrise¹ and the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach were lodged there. I was greatly puzzled what to do, for they sent word for me to come and dine with them; but, my dear little heart, I remembered my promise to you, and determined to decamp. So I pretended that I had pressing and urgent business which compelled me to leave at once, and, without seeing them, I marched off and changed my quarters. But I did not leave the town, for I found my brother-in-law and sister² here. I gave my sister an exact account of all that had taken place since she left, and she did the same to me. . . .

"To come to my story, they say I named you personally.³ You know the rest. I need not justify myself to you; you know me too well. I am now trying to find the author of this underhand business. Should I unearth him, I will avenge myself in a way that will make others careful not to invent any more lies. My brother-in-law also has a little matter to settle. Some one said in his cups: 'Oh, truly, when one has a sister-in-law who sleeps with a prince one can soon have regiments.'⁴ They say that the author of this story is Lieutenant-Colonel Grot,

¹ East Friesland. Colt sometimes calls her "Otfrise" too.

² Count and Countess Lewenhaupt.

³ It is worthy of note that the same charge, boasting when he was in his cups, of his intimacy with the Princess was made against Königsmarck two years later (1694) at the Court of Dresden.

⁴ This refers to Aurora von Königsmarck and the recent appointment of Count Lewenhaupt to a regiment of Celle.

or little Count Steinbock. We shall demand an explanation sword in hand, and see what they will say. I leave to-morrow for my estate. Farewell."

"En Route.

"On dismounting here they gave me three of your letters. Picture my joy! I had begun to think that you had quite forgotten me. M. de Bielke has begged me to come to supper with him, but as some ladies with whom I used to flirt will be there, I am not going, for I want to have the satisfaction of swearing to you that all the time I am away I have not said sweet things to any woman whatsoever. . . . Do not write to me any more. Two of your letters have been sealed with another seal, and that makes me fear. I will show them to you."

"Monday evening at REINBEK.¹

"As I again catch the post here I cannot let it go without writing, and I think this letter will reach you sooner than the one I sent this morning by my servant. Let us unite against those who would break us asunder; they will tire when they see our constancy. It is distraction to have no news from you and to be unable to hold you in my arms. I must arm myself with patience, little by little, for I am sore afraid that this summer I shall have to exercise myself greatly in that virtue. The postillion is on horseback. If I could be in his place I could see you by dinner-time, but as it is I cannot until after to-morrow. I am raging that old Time should lag so much. I spend every evening in miserable inns. Since I left Hanover I have only slept on straw; but (think of my impertinence!), uncomfortable though I was, every moment I wished you with me, without thinking that

¹ Reinbek is a village close to Hamburg.

you would be uncomfortable too. If my desire had come to pass I should have pitied you; for you would often have been very badly off for a bed, and roughly lodged. Farewell. I shall die if I do not see you soon."¹

On his return Königsmarck renewed his court to the Princess, with varying fortune as before.

Great military activity now prevailed at Hanover and Celle. The Duke of Hanover, satisfied that the Electorate was to come soon, at last declared for the Allies. The diplomacy of William of Orange had triumphed all along the line. The Brunswick princes were sending troops to Flanders. Saxony had been bribed with a present of one hundred thousand rix-dollars and the promise of the Garter. Brandenburg had been conciliated; and, last and most difficult of all, Denmark and Sweden were appeased for awhile. But these negotiations lost time; and while the Allies were haggling and William conciliating Louis again took the field. In vain William tried to hasten his confederate princes; they were late as usual in sending troops. The French king started on his campaign, and his progress resembled a triumphal march. To gratify his love of display, Louis held a grand review near Mons, the scene of his triumph the previous year. The pageant over, he set forth to lay siege to Namur. Fully alive to the advantage gained by the French, King William made every effort to hurry up his laggard allies, with the result that the troops of the several princes gradually took the field.

The troops of Celle and Hanover were to be commanded by Prince George Louis, and preparations at Hanover were pushed forward with all speed. Königs-

¹ The letter concludes with many more expressions of devotion.

marck was to go with his regiment; but to the astonishment of all he manifested no enthusiasm to serve in the campaign, and lingered until the eleventh hour. His letter to the Princess will explain his conduct. Knowing how she was spied upon, and doubtful of her strength and his, the Princess was afraid to risk a parting in private. He writes:

“[HANOVER, *June.*]

“The reluctance you have shown to speak to me surprises me; nay, more, it makes me tremble. But I will still try to believe that you could not do otherwise without giving ground for suspicion. Yet one should risk something when it is a question of “Good-bye” for six months.¹ I think so, for instead of going I linger here. See how much I love you! I neglect my duty, which calls me away for the rest of the year, though it is so urgent that I ought to go at once. But, my dear one, how can I leave without bidding you adieu? My love does not suffer me—I would rather die. I will not reproach you; I will keep silence and watch you at the games, for Madame la Princesse must play, apparently! I will go; but it must be from your lovely eyes that I learn my fate. If you do not like to *say* “Good-bye,” let me see it in your eyes,—they will give me light. Unless I cruelly deceive myself, I shall find much love in them. If I had sufficient self-control could I not have gone away—could I not have had orders so pressing that it would have been impossible for me to return, or perchance an illness which would have excused me from bidding you farewell? Yet I am glad that you give me the opportunity of showing you how much stronger my love

¹ The Hanoverian troops were away about six months—June to late October.

is than yours. I am truly your slave, and wear your chains with joy."

And again:

"I cannot leave Hanover without writing to you, yet to write renews my grief. The torments of hell would not pain me more than distance and absence from you. How happy I should be if I could be as one of the least of your servants, to be near you, to hear your voice! I would willingly change my condition for the common sentinel, for at least I could stand under your windows and worship you from there. Alas! that cannot be; and since I am destined to suffer, assure me of your love and constancy. Adieu."

At last Königsmarck tore himself away, and left Hanover for the camp, to march on the morrow to Flanders. At this point the Princess's letters begin.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRINCESS'S LETTERS

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

I can but do as wills the spirit in me,
Which is your spirit's servant. Ah! my lord,
My one love every way, my poor heart's blood,
Breath of my lips, and eyesight of mine eyes,
How did I live the life that loved you not?

SWINBURNE.

THE Duke of Hanover, astute time-server that he was, must have doubted at first whether he had done wisely in again throwing in his lot with King William, for victory everywhere attended the arms of Louis. The French king made rapid progress with the siege of Namur, and on the eighth day the virgin fortress surrendered to his conquering army. The citadel fell three weeks later. This victory marked the summit of the great monarch's glory. Te Deums were sung in all the churches of France, and his camp rang with shouts of triumph. But even in this hour of victory there came to Louis a reminder that he was not everywhere invincible; for while he lay before Namur, his priests chanting, his cannon blaring, sounds of rejoicing reached him from the camp of the Allies—rejoicings over the naval victory of La Hogue, wherein the English admiral, Russell, had utterly routed the French ships, and shattered for ever James II.'s chances of reascending the throne of England. The French king affected to treat this reverse

lightly, and a short time after retired to Versailles, leaving Luxemburg, the first general of France, in command of the army.

William hastened towards Namur in the hope of bringing relief, but he was too late. Between him and the already fallen fortress lay the troops of Luxemburg. The grand army of the Allies then took up their headquarters at Lambeque, and William was sometimes there and sometimes at Brussels. About six miles from Lambeque, at Steinkirk, Luxemburg had encamped with the main body of the French army. Thus the two armies remained throughout July, almost within sight of one another; but the country between was full of hedges and ditches, and neither would make the attack. The delay gave William one advantage: it afforded time for the laggard troops of his German allies to come up.

The Hanoverian troops, commanded by Prince George Louis and accompanied by Prince Christian, fifth son of the Duke,¹ and with Königsmarck in command of a regiment of foot-guards, began their march to Flanders the first week in June. On the day they set out the Duke of Hanover, accompanied by Prince George Louis and the English envoy Colt, went to the camp and held a grand review.

The Duke of Hanover ordered a general thanksgiving to celebrate the victory of La Hogue and so testify his fidelity to the English king. To set the seal upon it, Colt gave a magnificent entertainment, a banquet and a ball. He writes:

“The Duke and Duchess with all their Courts have done me the honour to sup with me, when they and the greatest part of the city proclaimed their affection and

¹ For whom the Duchess Sophia wished the command of an English regiment, which he did not get.

good will to His Majesty." And again: "My share in the affair [the general rejoicings] you will see at large in the paper part [probably the bill] which I hope will be approved of. I have on this occasion given a greater diversion than ever they saw in this place."¹

Sophie Dorothea was present at Colt's entertainment and took part in the festivities. Her husband, who went to Brockhausen after the review to take leave of the Duke of Celle, came back to Hanover on purpose to attend the celebrations, and a few days later he set out for Flanders. The Princess then left Hanover on a visit to her parents at Brockhausen; she remained there for some weeks. Prince Maximilian was also staying with the Duke of Celle, still in disgrace with his father, and urging his uncle to use his influence to save Moltke's life. His prayers were unavailing. Moltke was executed at Hanover in the second week of July, and the Court went to Luisburg—a country palace of the Duke of Hanover, about twenty leagues distant—to be out of the way.

All this time, from the day of their parting, the Princess was in constant correspondence with Königsmarck, who was marching with his regiment to Flanders. He joined the grand army near Brussels about the middle of July, and his letters to the Princess were written from the camp and different halting-places on the line of march, while she wrote to him from Hanover and Brockhausen.

Whatever restraint Sophie Dorothea may have put upon herself in public converse with her lover, no trace of it appears in her letters. Believing that she was writing to him alone, she pours forth her soul in absolute abandonment. She gives herself to him so completely, so unreservedly, and withal so intimately, that one

¹ Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, June 20, 1692,

almost shrinks from laying bare this confession of woman's love for man.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“[HANOVER, undated.]

“I spent the stillness of the night without sleeping, and all the day thinking of you, weeping over our separation. Never did a day seem so long to me; I do not know how I shall ever get reconciled to your absence. La Gouvernante¹ has just given me your letter; I received it with rapture. Rest assured I will do even more than I have promised, and lose no opportunity of showing you my love. If I could shut myself up while you are away and see no one, I would do so gladly, for without you everything is distasteful and wearisome. Nothing can make your absence bearable to me; I am faint with weeping. I hope to prove by my life that no woman has ever loved man as I love you, and no faithfulness will ever equal mine. In spite of every trial and all that may befall, nothing will sever me from you. Of a truth, dear one, my love will only end with my life.

“I was so changed and depressed to-day that even the Prince, my husband, pitied me, and said I was ill and ought to take care of myself. He is right,—I am ill; but my illness comes only from loving you, and I never wish to be cured. I have not seen any one worth mentioning. I went to visit the Duchess [Sophia] for a little while, but returned home as soon as possible, to have the joy of talking about you.² La Gazelle's husband³ came to

¹This must have been another name for the Fräulein von Knesebeck, *La Confidente*,

²*I.e.* with *La Confidente*.

³*La Gazelle* may have been Countess von Lewenhaupt (so called because of her gazelle-like eyes), whose husband was about to march with the Duke of Celle's troops to Flanders.

wish me good-bye; I saw him in my chamber, and he kissed my hand.

"It is now eight o'clock, and I must go and pay my court. How dull I shall seem!—how stupid! I shall withdraw immediately after supper, so that I may have the pleasure of reading your letters again, the only pleasure I have while you are away. Farewell, my worshipped one. Only death will sever me from you; all human powers will never succeed. Remember all your promises, and be as constant as I will be faithful."

"[HANOVER], *June 12, Sunday.*

"I have no news of you; I am restless, in despair, full of sad forebodings. I cannot believe that you would willingly neglect me, you have so deeply convinced me of your faithfulness; but I love you too fondly to be free from the anxiety inseparable from such love. I am not getting reconciled to your absence; it is intolerable, and nothing can equal my grief at being so far from my adored one. I deluded myself with the hope that I might have seen you after the review; I could have done so in all liberty, as the Prince was away. That false hope made me keep vigil two nights at the window, and every one who passed I fancied was you. La Confidente kept telling me differently, but I would hear no reason.

"I must give you an account of my day. I retired after dinner. In the evening there was music, and I played a little,—that is all. You must be pleased with my conduct. . . . Do not forget your oaths, nor let absence lessen the love you swore to me, for I love you to madness, and the mere thought that you may forget is enough to upset my reason. Above all, be faithful to me, or I shall die. The Duchess to-day spoke much of your beauty and the regularity of your features. Alas! I

fear me others will discover this comeliness too; It will cost me many tears.

"I must end this. It is three o'clock, and I must go to bed. Never doubt my fidelity; it is inviolable. I will live and die yours only."

Königsmarch to the Princess.

"[THE CAMP, undated.]

"You must let me complain, *ma chérie*, of the mean farewell you gave me. My love deserved something far different; but if you had a heart of ice you could not have given me a colder parting. I found the company very lively at the camp, every one sword in hand, prancing to the music of trumpets and kettledrums; but it all diverted me so little that I wished myself twenty leagues away. My dejection was so apparent that Monsieur Bielke¹ asked me what was the matter, and why I would not drink a glass of wine with him. I told him that I knew he was vexed about Aurora, and I was annoyed too, but I hoped he would not blame me in any way, as I knew nothing about it. He embraced me, and said he was sure I did not, but the pain she had caused him the last two days surpassed everything; and much more—too long to write—I will keep it for word of mouth. I will only add that he swore awful oaths that he would never speak to her again. The clinking of glasses, the noise of trumpets and kettledrums,² mingled with the softer sound of flutes and the hoarse cries of men drinking,

¹ "Count Bielke (a Swedish envoy), the most dangerous man in these parts . . . full of French designs."—*Vide* Colt's *Despatches*, June, 1692.

² "According to that old Teutonic fashion with which Shakespeare has made his countrymen familiar, as often as any of the great princes proposed a health, the kettledrums and trumpets sounded."—Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iv, p. 7.

made the drollest harmony in the world; but the revelry gave me opportunity to hide myself in a corner and dream at will. Whilst the others kissed, embraced, danced, stripped, and jumped on the tables, I thought only of my sad plight, and I found it so miserable that, in spite of all the festivity, tears sprang to my eyes and I was obliged to steal away to go to bed. Three hours of absence from you have grieved me so much that I am no longer master of my heart. I am so overcome with all these emotions that I have been beside myself all the evening."

"[WHILE ON THE MARCH, undated.]

"In this unpleasant abode nothing could be so dear to me as your dear letter. I read it again and again; I know it by heart, word for word. It is charming and tender, and heals all jealous pains. Be as good as your word, or you will never see your lover alive again.

"I knew the Prince was not returning to Hanover after the review, and therefore determined to take the post to see you, but I was watched so closely by a spy of Countess Platen that I dared not risk it. The post horses were ordered and ready, but I could not get rid of the man, who is named Mesbuck. You may imagine my rage, for I dreamed of the happiness of surprising you; but my plan miscarried. I have not had a happy moment except those your delightful letter gave me. I am an hour from Detmold. The Count sent a coach with six horses to meet me, and a message to say I would find very pleasant company at his house; but I excused myself on the ground that I was too tired. I did not tell him that love fatigued me. My major went to the party in my stead, and on his return told me all about the company, with whom he was greatly delighted. He praised

the ladies to the skies. Meanwhile I had gone to bed to think over my sorrows. I found them piteous, and trembled to see myself near the brink of an abyss. But why should I worry you? I have told you so many times that I fear your inconstancy, and you have so often reassured me, that I am a fool to doubt; yet I always fear. Water falling drop by drop pierces the most stony heart, and I am sure you will listen to me. You will give me your heart. You must ward off evil at the beginning.

"In bidding farewell to us all, Marshal Podevils¹ spoke to me with much friendliness and sincerity (it was between us alone), and he said something which startled me greatly. He said he believed me to be a man capable of much dissimulation, and he feared I had dissembled with him. I was taken aback, and made him many protestations. He answered that he wished to believe me, and promised his friendship; but, in bidding good-bye, he again took me aside and said: "My dear friend,

¹ Field-Marshal Heinrich von Podevils is spoken of in this correspondence as *le bon ami*, the good friend of Königsmarck and Sophie Dorothea; and indeed he was so. Marshal Podevils was born in 1615 in Pomerania, and took service very early in the Thirty Years War. His military talent was first discovered by the famous Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. At the death of the Duke, Podevils entered the French Army, and advanced rapidly in honour, and, because of his good services, he was naturalized in France. But Podevils was a Huguenot, and, in consequence of the Edict of Nantes, he left the French Army, and took service under Duke John Frederick of Hanover as Colonel-in-Chief of the Hanoverian Army. When Duke Ernest Augustus succeeded to the Duchy of Hanover, he appointed Podevils successively General, Field-Marshal, President of the Council of War, and Governor of the Royal Palaces of Hanover. Podevils died at Hamburg in 1696, full of years and of honour. The fact that such a man was the true friend of Königsmarck, and thought highly of him, speaks much in Königsmarck's favour.

may God guard thee, but take this advice from me: do not let thy love ever hinder thee from thinking of thy fortune." I replied that contentment had more charms for me than ambition; but he turned away and answered nothing. He left me full of cruel suspicions. Try to find out what it is all about, I implore you. Aurora's letters predict nothing good. Misfortune everywhere; but so long as one holds the loved one, what matters the price?"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[HANOVER], Monday, 13.

"I have this moment received your letter—at last. I hungered for it; I was sick with sadness. Nothing now gives me joy but the token that you remember me: I am sensitive to that—all else is indifferent. *Grand Dieu!* what happiness it would have been if you could have come back! I think I should have died of very joy. But, alas! it was not to be. . . .¹ This is not the only grief Countess Platen will cause me; I believe all my troubles will come through her. What our good friend Marshal Podevils said to you doesn't make me anxious; it concerns me, it is true, but he is an open and honest man, and we have nothing to fear from that quarter. I am indeed grateful that you refused the invitation to join the company at Detmold. It is charming that you should think of me; I pray you continue to do so, and be sure I am not unworthy. My one thought is how to please you, and I shall succeed. I am in despair that Aurora has not. . . ."²

¹ Some lines are missing here.

² The letter is torn off here. Doubtless the Princess is beginning to allude to Aurora's intrigue with Count Bielke, mentioned in Königsmarck's letter.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"IN THE COUNTRY OF TEGLENBURG, [June] 8.

"I should feel that I had committed a mortal sin were I to miss a place where the post passes without assuring you of my very humble obedience, though I can tell you of nothing but my love, and how little life has for me when I am away from your sweet self. The farther I am from you, the more I adore you. I fret night and day without finding any comfort. Sometimes I wish the French would be beaten, for then there would be a way of hope that I should see you again, because the King¹ would not require me; sometimes I wish myself dead, since I have to live without seeing you. In this way am I agitated day and night, without any hope of relief. What will become of me, dear one, should my love drive me to madness? Comfort me in my sad estate, and reassure me that I shall see you again—the most gracious lady in the universe, the most constant, and the most faithful. But I desire a constancy without any reproaches or any coquetry.

"I dined at Monsieur Busche's² yesterday; the company was not very choice—only some flighty people, so

¹ King William III. of England, commanding the allied armies.

² This Busche must not be confounded with Busche who married Catherine Meissenberg (sister of Countess Platen), sometime the mistress of Prince George Louis. That Busche died in 1688, and, as we have seen, his widow subsequently married General Weyke. The Busche above mentioned was a kinsman. He was subsequently president of the court which divorced the Princess Sophie Dorothea from the Electoral Prince.

A little later we find Colt also writing: "They have sent Monsi^r Busche, one of their privy councillors, to the Elector of Brandenburg, to press him to a speedy compliance with his former promise."—Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, June 26, 1692.

lively that they disgusted me in my sad mood. Madame, his wife, dined with us. She is the best woman in the world. I don't know if you are well acquainted with her; she is extremely thin, her age is fifty, but she is very witty, and her conversation pleased me the more because it ran mainly on morality and devotion. I certainly go in for the latter. I pray always that my passion may not become fatal to me, and God may keep you constant and make you an example to all your sex. I commend you to the Divine protection to keep you straight, so that I may never be tortured by thinking you behave badly. I hope to receive some of your letters from Wesel."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[HANOVER], Monday, 20.

"At my awakening they gave me your letter. I found it charming, loving, and all I would have it to be. Continue to feel as you write, for if you change I will not live. When I think each step you take removes you farther from me, I despair. Thousands of times I have thought of following you. What would I not sacrifice to be always with you! Alas! I should be too happy; there is no such perfect joy in this world. I avoid all men, and speak only to women: pray do not thank me for this, for I am pleased to do it. I never leave my chamber. I start to-morrow,¹ and go this evening to bid farewell to the Duchess. Prince Ernest is going to visit the Electress of Brandenburg, and perhaps they will return together.

"If I were to tell you all I feel and how vast is my love, I should never end; it is beyond all I can find words to tell, and I should count myself happy indeed were your

¹ For Brockhausen.

love to equal mine. I will not preach to you to be faithful to me, it would be unavailing; but I shall die if you are not. I have told you thousands of times that all the peace of my life depends on your fidelity. You may find others more lovable, but never one so loving; your slightest wish will be always law to me. But why should you change? You are loved to idolatry—your heart is sound. Farewell, *cher enfant*. You will be for ever loved."

The next day the Princess left Hanover for Brockhausen on a visit to her parents. Colt mentions in his despatch of June 17 the fact that the Duke of Celle was staying at Brockhausen, thus corroborating the Princess's letters, which are written from there after the 20th.

"BROCKHAUSEN, [undated].

"The only joy left me now is assuring you of my unalterable devotion: my love grows daily. I am glad to be in this quiet place, for it gives me more time to think of you: my mind is full of you only. My father and mother often speak to me, but I don't hear them, for my heart and my thoughts are far away—with you. I have not had a moment's happiness since you left; and when I think it will be four or five months before we can meet again, I fall into a melancholy I cannot hide. Sad forebodings crowd in upon me; I fear they will separate us for ever, or put obstacles in the way of our happiness. I see myself on the edge of a precipice (as indeed I am). If you saw my sad state you would pity me.

"You may be easy about my conduct; nothing on that account need ruffle your quiet or trouble your rest. To-day, for instance, scarcely was I dressed than I had to dine. Afterwards I went to see my mother for a

little while, and then she sent me home.¹ Max² escorted me. I left him in the ante-chamber; I did not stop a moment. He is more stupid than ever; he was quite confused. My father came to see me and showed me many attentions. I played with Chauvet.³ We supped, and then I retired, without staying to talk to any one. Good-night; I must to bed. Alas! what sad nights since you left me! When I think of the joys we shared together and my loneliness now, a great pang goes through me. Be true, dear one,—all the happiness of my life hangs on it. I live only for you.”

“BROCKHAUSEN, *June 25, July 5.*

“I had hoped to have had news of you from Wesel, and am much cast down because none came. I attributed it to the carelessness of your servants at Hanover, for I scarcely think you would neglect me: at least, let me flatter myself to that extent; it is the only consolation I have left. When I think you love me I forget all the

¹ The Duke of Celle's hunting-box at Brockhausen was very small, and, as the accommodation was insufficient, the Princess and her suite were lodged in a house hard by.

² Prince Max was staying with the Duke of Celle for a time, who was trying to talk him to reason (*vide* Colt's despatches). The Princess's estimate of Prince Max's character agreed in the main with that of Colt, who, speaking of his share in the Moltke plot, says: “Nor indeed was his [Prince Max's] own capacity very fit for it, though he is a very worthy gentleman, and much improved since he hath been at home these two years, having before lost his time by being too much delighted with the pleasures of Venice, where he had been in service five years.”

³ Marshal Jeremiah Chauvet was one of the Frenchmen whom the Duchess Eléonore brought in her train to the Court of Celle. He was not of noble birth, but the son of a blacksmith in Lorraine. In 1670 the Duke of Celle advanced him to the rank of colonel, and he became successively major-general, general, and field-marshal.

disasters which threaten—but I shall worry you with my fears. My father and mother overwhelm me with kindness, and, most reassuring, they have not mentioned your name since I came here. I am rather surprised at this, but I hope they are satisfied with what I told them before.

“I heard yesterday of the death of La Court’s¹ brother. It was a shock, for I thought of you. Like you, he was young, he was well, yet now he is dead. You cannot imagine my sad reflections: I fear for you more than ever. If you truly love me, be careful of yourself for my sake; for if anything happened to you, what would become of me? I would not stay a moment in this world; life would be impossible. As it is, since you went away, I lead only a lingering life; but I look forward to seeing you again, and that hope brings consolation. What would be left if I lost it? But I will not fret myself with these sad thoughts; all my prayers and desires are for your safety. Day and night, night and day, the good God is troubled with the prayers I offer Him for you. If you but knew how intense is my love you would pity me; it increases every moment, absence does not lessen it. Without change or swerving I love you, and everything that touches you, so tenderly, so perfectly, so *delicately*, that imagination fails to tell.

“I take a positive delight in avoiding persons. My parents and Bernsdorff are pleased. They think I shun every one because I wish to be with them; they little know it is because of you—that I may show you my devotion and my love. They talk of going to Wiesbaden. My mother wishes it, as her health is very indifferent, and my father thinks of going too, and they want me to go with them. Let me know if you approve. If you do

¹ Probably some Court lady at Hanover.

not, they will find it difficult to make me go; but as long as I please you the rest counts for nothing."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"DULMEN, June 14/34.

"This is the first place since my last letter where I have found a post, and I take good care not to let it go without writing these lines to assure you of my love and tenderness. The only thing which makes me uneasy is a tale I have heard from the Baron von Brandenburg, whom you have seen at Hanover. I am also very miserable at not being able to get your letters until I reach Wesel. You had some by every post from me. Is it fair, for you are more certain about me than I am of you? Now let me tell you the story of Baron von Brandenburg.¹ . . . I am this moment sending a courier to Wesel to fetch your letters. It is six leagues from here. I hope I may receive them to-morrow morning."

"BORGUEM on the 16th [June].

"My courier has brought me a packet of letters without any from you; it is incredible. The post goes by again to-morrow, and if I get none it will nearly kill me. I hope my correspondent has sent them to Antwerp. I have written to the Widow Goodsblut; but if it turn out that she has none either, I shall die of grief. Have you forgotten the man who worships you in the space of a fortnight? I shall wait eight days, and then, if I hear nothing, I shall know you love me no longer, and I will hasten to the grand army (as soon as I know from Antwerp) and seek a glorious death. Then you can boast

¹ Here follows a long story about the said Baron, who loved a Prussian lady of high rank and great beauty, who proved unfaithful to him.

that your unfaithfulness has killed me. But first tell the world the promises you vowed to me, and let that theatre judge if I were wrong in seeking death. Can it be that God has made such a charming woman with so little fidelity? I am like a man on whom sentence of death has been passed and who is waiting for the hour of his execution. I hardly feel as if I were alive. My mind is so troubled that I can scarcely finish this page. Farewell, perhaps for ever!

"I am three leagues from Wesel. The post goes by again without any letter from you. Cruel one! is it possible that you have such a traitor's heart, and forget me so soon?"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"BROCKHAUSEN, June 27/ July 7.

"I do not deserve your reproaches; I shall never deserve them. I cannot imagine why you accuse me of negligence, for even if you do not receive my letters you ought to know me well enough not to lay the blame on me. The fault is not mine, I assure you. Is it possible you mean all you say? You occupy my heart solely and entirely; all the rest is of so little account that I do not give it a thought. I have written with all possible regularity; if I could have written oftener I would have done so gladly, for my only pleasure is to make you remember me and assure you of my love and faithfulness. But this place [Brockhausen] is so far from every means of communication that it greatly delays the joy of receiving your letters, and the same reason, I fear, may lead to your receiving mine very irregularly; besides, the floods are so great that the couriers cannot pass, and so they are obliged to remain here all the week. I spend the whole day with my mother, who talks to me of the danger of

abandoning one's self to one's penchant. I say 'Amen' to it all, and so get on well with her, and all of them.

"I have a thousand fears about you. Chauvet told me yesterday that according to all appearances there might be a battle to-day. You know how I love you. Imagine, then, my state of mind when I think that the only being I care for in the world, for whom only I live, is exposed to thousands of dangers. If you love me, take care of yourself; I should die if any accident were to happen to you. I am leading the saddest life imaginable. The more change I have the more I find that cure is useless, for everywhere I carry my love and my sorrow. The burden is no easier for me in this peaceful place. I see no end to my worries, and the time I have to get through without you seems an eternity. But what joy when I see you again! It will be impossible for me to moderate my transports; I fear everybody will see how much I love you. It matters little, for you are worthy, and I never can love you enough."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"VENLO, July 1/II, 1692.

"It is true, then, that you have forgotten me, and the pleasures of the comedy, the music, and, what is worse, the foreigners,¹ are the cause of your forgetfulness? I know it from Monsieur le Prince,² with whom I dined to-day. I suppose this is the way to love; but I, alas! cannot. I have neglected everything since I left you; I

¹ They were probably special envoys, who had come to Hanover on business connected with the campaign against the Turks in the Morea, the intrigues concerning the Electorate, and other matters. Colt mentions that a Baron Eck came to the Court of Hanover in June from the Elector of Saxony, and also a Baron Hasfelt "on his way to France."

² Prince George Louis, who had now joined the troops.

have even forgotten to shave, and I went all unkempt to the Court quarter of the camp. Everybody stared. Even the Prince asked me what was the matter, for he found me so haggard and worn. I pretended that I had the colic; he little knew the truth. Until now I only feared that you had forgotten me; but since I know that the Piedmontese Count and the Austrian have arrived, I no longer doubt your inconstancy. Cruel one! I know my rivals. Yes, I know them, and that is sufficient. But you have to deal with a man who loves you to distraction, and you made me believe you loved me in the same way. I have neglected fortune, happiness, everything for you, and you treat me like this! It is abominable. I will avenge myself and die. Yes, I will avenge myself in such a way that the whole world will ring with my wrongs. You wished to remain in your chamber to bewail my departure. Your chamber became the opera house, your weeping came from laughing overmuch, and your consolation, instead of reading my letters, as you told me, was in hearing sweet things from others. It is too much. I can bear no more. You drive me to extremities. I will join the Elector of Bavaria's service, and then seek those who have stolen from me your ungrateful heart."

"VENLO, 1/II.

"I am sighing and trembling while I write this to you. I have no idea how I stand with you, for I have received only one of your letters. I am cursing my bad luck, but, alas! that does not give me comfort in my misery.¹ . . . No, by Heaven! I will not lose you! I will move heaven and earth before I give you up. Were you to change yourself into Jupiter I would not fear the thunderbolt,

¹ Here follow pages of reproaches and upbraidings.

but would try to avenge myself on my rivals. I could not get leave to go to the grand army, so I must wait until our troops march. It is annoying; but I bear all with patience.

"My sister would like to know if the Court is going in the autumn to some baths, as she would greatly like to go and pay her respects to Madame la Princesse. La Confidente says nothing about the unfaithfulness of her good mistress, but that is only natural, for if I cannot trust you, neither can I trust the people about you. But you know well that God will punish you; there is nothing so certain as that. Take heed therefore and beware."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"BROCKHAUSEN, June 30/July 10.

"Two of your letters reached me to-day, but instead of finding them full of love, I found reproaches which I do not deserve nor shall ever deserve. I cannot tell you my surprise at the tone of your letters. I have done absolutely nothing since you left. I shall never do anything all my life except what will be agreeable to you, for my one desire is to make manifest the love I bear you. My constancy is without flaw, and I am far from being the coquette you so unjustly call me. I could not help bursting into tears when I read all the hard things you wrote. What right or cause have I given you to have such a bad opinion of me? Is it because I love you to adoration, because I neglect all the friends I have in the world, because I have not heeded the lectures and preachments of my parents, nor thought of all the misfortunes that may come upon me through this? I cannot express to you my grief. You hint at my pleasing people who may supplant you in my affections; they assuredly do not deserve the honour you do them, and I am ashamed to

have to excuse myself on their account. I spoke very little to the Piedmontese Count, and not a word to the Austrian. I wrote to you very precisely about everything I have done and everything I am prepared to do for you. I have sworn all the vows you wished, to convince you thoroughly of my good faith. Nothing will make me change. I love you far above what I can tell you, even when you give me cause to repent. Yet you will attach yourself to the Elector of Bavaria, you will forsake me, and all for a suspicion that has not the least appearance of reason! Is this loving? Do you love me still, or are you only seeking a pretext to leave me? If you still have doubts it will be very easy for me to clear them away, for I have taken no step nor done anything whereof my conscience is afraid. I will gladly swear thousands of dreadful oaths to you on my innocence. I shall have no peace until I know how I stand with you. If the tenderest love and the most inviolable faithfulness will satisfy you, you may be satisfied, for no love was ever so sincere as the love I bear for you."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"FOUR LEAGUES FROM VENLO, 5/16.

"The lieutenant who went to the Court quarter of the camp brought me a large bundle of letters. I was in highest joy, thinking surely I should find some from you; but I was deceived, for I found nothing except letters from Prince Ernest and from Marshal Podevils. Every one is writing but you. I have reproached you so much that I will say no more except that you have been dancing at Colt's *fête*.¹ I will, however, wait for your letters from Antwerp, which I hope will clear up everything. But you cannot excuse your behaviour at Hanover, espe-

¹ Colt's *fête* was given on Sunday, June 18.

cially when the foreigners were there; and whatever the Duke might have wished you to do, you ought not to have consented. This will be the very last letter I shall write to you if I hear nothing from you."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"BROCKHAUSEN, [undated] (? July 2).

"I suffer agony, and can no longer bear the pain your unjust suspicions cause me. You told me yourself to write only once to Wesel, and all my other letters have gone to Antwerp. You ought, however, to have received some of them. I know not to whom to attribute this carelessness, but you are greatly in the wrong if you believe that I have forgotten you. Time will prove my innocence and your injustice. I am hurt to the quick, for since your departure my only thought has been how best to show you my fidelity. I am grieved that you are displeased because I went to Monsieur Colt's *fête*, but I could not avoid going, they pressed me so much. The foreigners did not detain me at Hanover; they left a few days before I came to Brockhausen; I have already told you I did not talk to them. I am incapable of deceiving you, even in thought; I love you too passionately. Yet you believe I betray you. You will not write to me. You plunge me in despair. How do I know? What if some one has held back my letters to make us quarrel? I have thousands of evil forebodings and many fears, but you cap them all and overwhelm me with grief by believing me guilty. Ought it even to enter your mind that I should fail in the love I bear you? I would rather fail to myself, for you are a thousand times dearer to me.

"Unfortunately the floods still detain us here.¹ I am

¹ "The extraordinary floods have kept the Duke from Celle."—Colt's *Despatches*, July 4, 1692.

grieved because of my letters. We may be here for a week, perhaps."

"BROCKHAUSEN, *July 7.*

"We start to-morrow for Celle, where I hope to find some letters from you; I am in sore need of them to deliver me from this anxiety. I have not a moment of peace. I am trembling for fear we are betrayed; but what I fear most of all is your violent temper, which will not let you reflect in the least, nor give a thought without at once believing me guilty. This suspense is driving me to despair. To-morrow I shall know what to expect. If I find nothing I am lost. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XV

¹ DOUBTS AND FEARS

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away
And the bird estranged.

BROWNING, *James Lee's Wife*.

THE floods having abated, the Court of Celle left Brockhausen and returned to Celle. The Princess accompanied her parents and continued to stay with them. She feared at one time she might have to join the Hanoverian Court at Luisburg; but instead she remained at Celle, and made preparations for a long visit to Wiesbaden with her mother. On arriving at Celle she writes to Königsmarck:

“CELLE, *July 9.*

“I was burning with impatience to get here,¹ for I hoped to find your letters. Alas! there were none, and I spent a night of tears. Again I hoped to receive one this morning. My hope was vain, and for the last eight days, ever since you wrote me that cruel letter, I fear that we are betrayed. I am trembling on the edge of a precipice, but my own danger is the least of my anxieties. I scarcely think of the misfortunes, inevitable and unavoidable, which surely await me if discovered: you, only, occupy my thoughts. More than death or disgrace

¹ “The Duke, since his return hither . . .” — *Colt's Despatches*, Celle, July 11, 1692.

I fear that you may leave me; if you do, there is no more happiness for me. You are all my life, and if I lose you, nothing in the world will console me. I shall not have a moment of peace until my fears are set at rest.

"I received a letter from your sister¹ this morning saying that you had written her a violent letter about me, and she had a good mind to send it on. I wish she had; at least, I should have seen what you thought of me. She tells me also that if my parents go to the baths at Aix, she will go there with her sister.² At present they speak only of Ems or Wiesbaden, but it amounts to the same thing. I have already asked whether you approve of my going on that journey. Le Satyre,³ is here. He tells me that a little while before the discreet Prince's departure, some woman asked His Highness whether he did not wish to fight you because you got on so well with me, whereas he seemed to be on bad terms with me for a long time past. It is not difficult to guess who asked this question!⁴ I have a continual palpitation of the heart, which I attribute to my anxiety the last few days. You make me suffer, but I suffer gladly for your dear sake."

"CELLE, *July 15/25.*

"I shall know my fate to-morrow; I am waiting for it with such anxiety that I cannot sleep. I feel sure that if you had received my letters you would not have missed two posts without a line, unless indeed you take pleasure in bringing me to despair. Everything tends to confirm my fears that we are betrayed. If Countess Platen begins to meddle you may imagine what there is to

¹ Aurora von Königsmarck.

² Countess von Lewenhaupt.

³ Some Hanoverian courtier.

⁴ (?) The Countess Platen.

dread, but I tremble most at your own violence. You say you will enlist in some other service, and I shall see you no more. The thing may already be done for aught I know. I am terribly depressed; it may be a foreboding of misfortunes to come. All I can say is, that if it costs you so little to give me up, you have a very feeble love after all. When the heart is deeply touched one does not give up the loved one so easily; at least, one takes the trouble to examine thoroughly the charges against her. But I cannot expect you to have the patience to do that; I know your ways too well. At the first hint you will break away altogether: perhaps, later, thoughts and reflections will follow; but it will be too late then, and I shall have the grief of loving you to adoration, and knowing all the while that you have never truly loved me. The thought is so maddening that it nearly turns my brain. Farewell. You will be the cause of all my misery in the same way as you have been the source of all my happiness; but I love you—*Mon Dieu!* how I love you!”

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“NEAR DIST, *July 5/15.*

“At last I have been so happy as to receive two of your letters, and as one is dated Monday, the 13th, and the other the 16th, I don't think there are any missing. But you tell me in one that you spoke in the preceding letter of the foreigners at Hanover. I have not seen that yet. The last came from Antwerp, on which was all my hope. I received them in a packet—two letters, as I notify above; but what makes me uneasy is that they have been sealed with a wafer and not with your usual seal. I beg you tell me the reason, for it makes me most anxious. A funny thing has happened. I wrote to Prince Ernest

joking about many ladies of our Court; I also spoke about Madame la Princesse, but in such terms as respect commands. I sent the letters to the commissary, to forward to Hanover. A certain adjutant happened to see the man carrying the letters, looked at the top of them, and as he found one addressed to 'Monsieur le Prince,' he looked no farther, but took the whole bundle to our general,¹ who, without looking at the superscription, opened it, but seeing it was written in terms of great friendship, he only read, he says, the beginning, and sent it back to me, sealed by Lenner, who swore to me that the Prince did not read it all through. The harm would not have been very great, except that I spoke of La Platen and Schwartz and La Schulenburg² a little lightly. Your story about those two made me laugh as much as my sadness would allow,³ but I cannot forget the stay you made at Hanover when the foreigners were there. At any other time I should have forgiven you, but as it is I know not what to say.

"The day before yesterday I had a long conversation with my colonel's wife in the Capuchins' garden, where I was taking a solitary walk. She came up with her husband and several officers, and took upon herself to chaff me about my beard. Then she went on to say she pitied me because I was so unlucky, and another man was more successful. I pressed her to tell me whom she thought I loved. She would not tell me positively, but she let me know enough to be sure she meant you. I urged her to tell me the name of the happy man; I did not want to know the name of the lady, only the cavalier, but she

¹ Prince George Louis, commanding the Hanoverian troops.

² Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg, afterwards Duchess of Kendal, mistress of the Prince of Hanover.

³ This must refer to something in a missing letter.

refused. I begged of her to tell me where she got her information. She said nothing definite, but enough to make me guess she got it from Madohr. You cannot think what an impression it has made on my mind. I tell you frankly that unless you cure me of my new and just suspicions I shall never return to you. It will be hard for me; I shall not be able to survive it. But it is better to die than to live without being loved. . . . In finishing my letter I took up yours again to look for a little comfort. I found some; but as you only give me an account of the 13th, and as the Prince went on the 6th,¹ I want to know what you were doing the other days. Apparently the foreigners were at Hanover, for the Duchess took you to the comedy on the 13th, a sure sign that the foreigners were there, otherwise the comedy would not have been played. On the 15th the little man² went. You kept your room, but not on the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th. What was the day of the *fête*?³ There were three days you might have kept indoors, for the Prince's departure was a good pretext; but the desire to be seen by the foreigners made you forget all your promises. You cared nothing about the Prince's departure nor for mine; both must have been very welcome to you. . . . You tell me in your letter, 'let us love one another for ever.' Did you really think about what you were writing? At that very time I believe your mind was full of pleasing Monsieur le Rittermeister.⁴ No doubt he

¹ *I.e.* to Brockhausen after the review, which was held on June 6, and, as we have seen, he did not return to Hanover for some days.

² "The little man"—the Prince, who set forth for Flanders on the 15th (25th).

³ Colt's party and the public rejoicings to celebrate the victory of La Hogue.

⁴ A nickname for one of the "foreigners."

told you that he had come from the depths of Turkey to admire your beauty, of which he had heard the Turks speak when he was a prisoner amongst them. He charmed you, for that sort of flattery is sure to please a woman, and you doubtless believed he was telling you the truth; but he only came to Hanover to pick up a few hundred ducats to set up his ruined equipage again before Grossvardein. I tell you that I cannot speak of the man without my blood boiling. I may suspect you wrongly, but appearances are against you. I have suffered torments for weeks from not having received your letters. Your departure from Hanover did not take place when you said; I knew from the first that the foreigners were there. You go to the comedy, the festival, and the music, notwithstanding that you had a good pretext to remain in your rooms; and, above all, I know that you talked with that count. That is the foundation for my suspicions."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"CELLE, July 13/23.

"This morning I have received a letter from you—at last. I cannot describe my misery and suspense the last twelve days; now nothing can equal my joy. Though you reproach me so bitterly, and though you suspect me, it is so easy to justify myself that I am not in the least anxious. My anxiety is lost in the fact that you are unchanged; and I find charm and tenderness in all you say. I implore you remain in this mood, and rest assured that I would rather die a thousand deaths than do anything to displease you. I appreciate your sensitive tenderness. I can assure you that all the actions of my life will bear witness to the love I have for you. I am surprised that you still write about the foreigners. I wrote

to you every day everything I did—I forgot no detail; but you mix up my narrative so much that I must endeavour to make clear all the points which puzzle you, and again relate everything. The Prince went to Brockhausen after the review. He returned to Hanover the Friday following. On Saturday he and the Duke paid me a visit according to custom, and the same day the Count who vexes you so much put in an appearance. It is true I played in the evening, but I only spoke to him at the dinner-table, and that very little. The next day was Sunday. After dinner there was music. I appeared rather late. I played cards, as usual, and I spoke a few words to the Count as he was looking on at the game. On Monday the Prince and the Duke went back.¹ The Duke was to have come for the comedy, but the Duchess came alone to it, and afterwards she went back. I am ready to make any vow you like that I had not the least flirtation with the Count, nor had I the wish or thought to talk to him. The day he took his leave I was passing through the ante-chamber of the Duchess's apartments, but I did not pause a moment; I went home directly. He went away the next day (Tuesday). On Wednesday I did not leave my chamber, as the Prince left. I did not appear either on Thursday or Friday. I saw no one for four days except my women. On the Saturday, when the Prince and the Duke came, I had to show myself; and on Sunday was the festival of which I have told you so much already that I have no more to say. On Monday I took leave of the Duchess. On Tuesday I went home.² I am glad my memory is better than yours, for, were it to fail, you are just the man to pick a

¹ Perhaps to Herrenhausen.

² *I.e.* went to her parents at Brockhausen. It is noteworthy that Hanover is not "home" to her.

quarrel about nothing. I should have a rough time of it; but carping as you are, I defy you to find fault with my conduct, for it is irreproachable, and my love passes words. You must surely see from all I have just told you that it was not for the Count's *beaux yeux* I lingered [at Hanover]. I am ashamed to be compelled to justify myself concerning him. Neither he nor any man in the world could make me take any step displeasing to you. I know, alas! your sensitiveness on these matters. Your suspicions and accusations of coquetry drive me to despair. I have renounced such arts for ever, and in giving myself to you, I think only how best to please you: all my wishes are bounded there.

“It is hard to excuse you for your injustice, except on the ground of the silly things your colonel's wife told you. Have I made any impression on your mind? You remember, I told you a thousand times that my enemies would spare no effort to part us, and begged you urgently not to listen to their tales. However, ask the woman to give you the name of the cavalier, so that I may see how far her audacity goes. Were I at Hanover people might tell me the same things about you, but I should not so readily believe them, for I trust you and your promises. Believe me, my heart is safe in your keeping. When you think of your merits and of my love you ought to have no uneasiness; I belong so truly to you that death alone can part us. The last twelve days I have known, alas! the extent of my tenderness too well to believe any one ever loved so strongly as I love you. I had no doubt that I was betrayed, and the Countess Platen had meddled; but though I was in danger of being lost for ever, I vow I never even thought about it, for you alone made me anxious. I feared to lose you; I trembled lest on the impulse of the moment you would

enlist in the service of the Elector of Bavaria, and I should see you no more! But I am far different to-day: my joy is now so great that I cannot hide it. Why am I so far from you? What joy to be with you, to prove by my caresses how I love and worship you. In God's name, believe me, and put away anything which might make you doubt. Above all, do not heed the silly tales you may hear. We have any number of people to fear; therefore let us be on our guard. Be unto me as I am to you. If you remember, you once said you would give up war and live for me alone, but I fear you have already forgotten it. If my blood were wanted to ransom you from danger I would give it gladly, for I cannot exist without seeing you. I lead a lingering life. I have not really *lived* a moment since you left; only your dear letters give me a gleam of gladness. I think of all the joys we had together, and then on my weariness and loneliness to-day. What a difference! When will that delightful time return?

"The siege of Namur¹ makes me tremble. Take care of yourself, and remember that my life is linked with yours. Ah! my dear one, why am I not with you in the battle? I would gladly die by your side. Once more, good-bye. My love is inexhaustible; I belong to you a thousand times more than to myself."

"[CELLE], July 16/26.

"I expected to have a letter from you on my awakening, but instead of the delight of news from you I had only the tedium of a letter from my husband. I know not if you are to blame for this negligence. If all you

¹ Namur was besieged throughout the first weeks of June. The citadel fell about June 21.

wrote in your last letter be true I ought not to be uneasy, but I can never be sure. If, unluckily, some malicious person has told you some silly story I must not, of course, expect to hear for a long time. If you knew the grief I suffer when the post goes by without bringing a letter from your dear hand, you would be more punctual in writing, for my only joy is in seeing these tokens of your remembrance. I wrote to you yesterday, and indeed every day. Not a day goes by that I do not write, and as long as I am here I shall send four times a week. It is a great pleasure to me, and I take good care not to fail. I am getting on admirably with my parents; I duly pay my court to them, and they have never shown me more kindness. I shall be here a long time; I am glad of it, and I believe you will be glad too, for at this Court there is no one. I prefer solitude now to all the pleasures in the world. I am inconsolable because I have not received a letter from you. Patience until Wednesday! The suspense is enough to kill me. Write so that I may receive your letters regularly, for I cannot go on living in this way. You say that you have made a vow no man has ever made before. I am dying to know what it is; but I am sure, whatever it may be, it does not equal the resolution I have made—to henceforth avoid all men, to show nothing but distant politeness to everybody, to make every effort to please you, to scorn all misfortunes that may befall, and to link my life with yours. This is my resolve; are you satisfied with it?

“I got into bed when I had finished this and was reading your dear letters. I thought myself safe because I had given out that I was asleep; but to my surprise my mother came to wish me good-night a second time. All La Confidente could do was to hide the letters under the quilt. I scarcely dared move for fear the paper might

rustle; but at last my mother went away, to my great relief, for I was terribly afraid. I dislike all these surprises, but it is impossible to avoid them."

"CELLE, *July 18/28.*

"I cannot employ my time better than in writing to you; it gives me such delight that I could spend whole days at it, though nothing happens here except the same smooth, uneventful round. But my love is inexhaustible, and of itself would give me enough to entertain you; though to tell you the truth I am sad at having received no news of you. I fear you have found some more agreeable occupation than thinking of me. I do all I can to drive away such thoughts, but I love you too fervently to be easy, and you are altogether too fascinating for women to leave you alone. They will do their best to estrange you from me. Resist their allurements, I implore you, and come back to me as tender as when we parted. The memory of all that has taken place between us forms my only joy now; indeed, I wish for no other while you are absent.

"They say the Electress of Brandenburg is at Luisburg.¹ If so I shall be unable to avoid going there. I am much vexed about it, for I shall have to be always with her, when my only pleasure is to be alone, thinking of you. I am dying to see you with your beard. I would give my blood to be two hours with you. But, dear God! I must not think of it; that is what distresses me. Never leave me again, but let us look forward to that happy future when we shall be parted no more. I would rather

¹"Moltke was executed on Monday, and the Court has gone to Luisburg to be out of the way."—Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, July 18, 1692. The Electress changed her mind.

brave everything than live without you. Oh, my love, my love! all the misfortunes of the world, all the blame, all the shame, are not half so dreadful to contemplate as separation from you!"

"CELLE, *July 20/30*

"I do not know what construction to put upon your silence; I cannot imagine the reason. To-day I have received another letter from the Prince: I am piqued to notice that he is more regular in writing than you. What has become of your eagerness? Does the Brussels air inspire you with coldness? Has a new passion entirely effaced me from your memory? I cannot reassure myself. You have no good excuse for your neglect, for while you are with the army you can write at any moment, but you do not. Had you not received any of my letters, and had I not received any of yours, I might think that knavish tricks are being played; but as that is not so, I cannot delude myself any longer. I have written to you so regularly that you must surely see my only pleasure lies in assuring you of my love and fidelity. You reply so irregularly that I fear I weary you; pray don't force yourself to write to me unless you can do so with a good heart. No doubt you have pleasanter occupations, and I would not be so unkind as to take you away from them. I wish your inclination to govern all your actions, but I cannot suit myself to everything you do for the mere sake of decorum. I confess I am piqued, very much so, at your indifference. I try to excuse you as much as possible, but I cannot find any solution of the riddle. I have never been wounded so sensibly before. But, believe me, however much I have reason to be dissatisfied, however much I may become indifferent to you, I will not fail in anything I have promised. Pray let me

know if you consent to my going to Wiesbaden. The journey is almost decided. My mother wishes it extremely, and she is writing to-morrow to the Prince to ask his permission for me to go. I entreat you, write as soon as you possibly can. What you wish shall be done. Farewell.

"I wanted to finish thus, but I have not the strength. I take up my pen again to beg you to come back to me. Without you I cannot live; I will expose myself to everything rather than lose you. See how low you bring me! I am forced to believe you guilty, however much I wish to think you innocent. Yet I write thus."

"CELLE, *July 22 / August 1.*

"It is very hard to be angry when one loves so tenderly. All my anger is gone, and I delude myself with the hope that it is your servants' neglect, and not yours, that prevents me from receiving your letters. If I do not get any to-morrow I think I shall go mad; it will be the third post. If you knew my anxiety you would pity me. I fear no end of things, but most of all that you have forgotten me and some new passion engages you wholly: that thought torments me always. I tremble lest you be unfaithful. Who could be trusted if you deceive me? If you do so I shall renounce the whole world, and retire to some lonely spot where I can weep over my loss. I want to know if you approve of the journey I have already asked you about. My mother yesterday wrote so urgently to the Prince that he will be unable to refuse his permission. If he gives me leave, and you refuse it I shall be greatly perplexed. There is, however, no reason why you should withhold permission, for there will be no one at Wiesbaden, and those who escort us on the journey are of no consequence: these are

the two essential points for you to consider, if you love me still. I assure you I have not thought of enjoying myself there, nor of seeing many people. In my present mood society is the last thing I desire: solitude suits me better than pleasure. My impatience to see you surpasses all that I can express; and if I do not find you the same on your return, what will become of me? You alone have brought joy into my life; you know that I have counted all else as naught, and all my desires are limited to pleasing you, to have you all mine. If I do not succeed, life will have nothing left for me; you alone make me love it—you will make me hate it. Farewell."

"CELLE, *July 25 / August 4.*

"This is the third post, and still no letter! Surely so tender a lover as you always seemed to be cannot have wholly forgotten me—or are we betrayed? It positively must be one thing or the other. The suspense is so acute that I have not a moment's peace. But my great fear is that you have changed. I think of nothing else, nor of all that may happen to me. Is it possible that you have forgotten your vows of eternal fidelity? I strive to drive away my sad thoughts, but I am in such abject melancholy that I fear it is a foreboding of misfortune. If you love me no longer I shall never be comforted. But what is the use of telling you that? You know it, and perhaps the knowledge has not prevented you from becoming unfaithful. Why do you force me by your silence to believe the worst? I have not deserved this coldness, for none ever loved to tenderly before. If I receive no letter from you by the next post I shall no longer be able to doubt. What pleasure can you find in grieving me thus? What have I done to be treated in

this way? Is it because I love you to madness and am faithful to you with a faithfulness that nothing will ever equal? I have not the strength to say more, for I am writing perchance to an ungrateful being, and the thought is death. Farewell. If no letters come by the first post I shall risk sending a note by Lenner, for if there should be treachery I fear that you have received none of mine. I send you this by the postmaster here."

Fräulein von Knesebeck to Königsmarck.

"*Mon Dieu!* what does it mean? Why do the letters miscarry so? I would give much to know the reason. Her Highness fears that you have become unfaithful, and though I keep telling her the contrary, she does not believe me. All my fear runs on treachery. It must be the fault of your servants; you would do well to write and ask them the reason. It appears they forward you all your letters. If the others fare as badly as these it will comfort me, but if you receive them more regularly what can it mean? Why should these letters be so long on the road? Beware, sir. Do not neglect to find out, for the more I think of it the more anxious I become. I think you wrote in one of your letters that you were uneasy about the seal which I put inside the letter, and I wrote afterwards that I sealed it with that. All this makes me fear that the letters have been opened, and that they have taken away something. You have also written to Her Highness asking what she did after His Highness left. She told you everything, day by day; it cannot have been taken out of the letters. In truth, I know not what to think. I am half inclined to go and see about it myself, and end this anxiety. In the last letter, I wrote to you to send me an answer direct here; I do hope you addressed the letter to me in my own name.

If you have not done so let me know, so that I may see to it. "L. S."¹

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"WAVER, August 14/24.

"At last I have reached the pinnacle of bliss. I received five of your letters at once, but I see by the last that two are still missing. That distresses me, for I do not know how to recover them, and I would not like to lose any of your dear letters, they comfort me too much. You cannot imagine what joy it gives me to find you are innocent. I humbly beg your pardon for having unjustly suspected you. I am greatly grieved about it, and I hope you will not be disgusted with me altogether, for it is because I love you so much that these fancies come to me. Do not punish me as I deserve; I have been punished enough already by the anguish these wicked suspicions have caused me. I promise you to have no more of them. What can I do to show you my gratitude for the quiet life you are leading? If my eternal love suffices; it is yours; if you desire a life *sans peur et sans reproche*, it is yours also. Night and day, day and night, I only think of how to please you. My love for you passes passion; I will be faithful unto death. What! I suspected you of inconstancy. Ah! base am I! You have shed tears for love of me. Oh! dear heart, do not pain those lovely eyes; I am not worthy. What distresses me most is to find that you are more reasonable than I, for you tell me you have not received my letters, and you attribute this to the neglect of my servants at Hanover. You are right, for this is the eighth I have written to you, though I had not received any from you.

¹ *La Sentinelle*—one of the pseudonyms of the Fräulein von Kneesebeck.

I was inclined at first to think it was your fault, without considering that a hundred accidents might have hindered. This is my defect—my weakness; but, dearest, remember it springs from loving you so much. I am very glad you are going to Wiesbaden. I am so satisfied with your conduct that you might go to Paris without causing me any anxiety. I am glad you are on such good terms with your parents; this time you should take advantage of it, for there are moments we can never recover. . . . I am delighted to hear that you find Prince Max sillier than ever; I hope he will never again salute you. The portrait I have with me is dearly cherished; you need not fear any one seeing it for I guard it so carefully that I defy the cleverest man in the world to guess where it is. My pretty heart, you say in one of your letters that perhaps at this very moment I am dividing my heart with others. You see how I am all yours! We have been for six days only four leagues from Brussels without my having thought of setting my foot therein. Yesterday there was a great feast in Brussels called the 'Feast of the Miracle,' and Monseigneur l'Electeur,¹ and all the great ones and generals of the army went in post-chaises to celebrate it; many fair ladies were there, too. I knew of it soon enough to have gone; but I swear, my dearest, I never thought of going. My soldiers went, and they could not praise it enough, particularly the fair sex. I would not go to Brussels at all if I were not obliged to have a certain bracelet made for me, of which you know, and a copy in miniature of a portrait I shall wear for ever next my heart. My Lord Portland² showed me much friendliness, and assured me

¹ Probably the Elector of Bavaria.

² Hans William Bentinck, first Earl of Portland and ancestor of the present Duke, accompanied William of Orange to England as

that the King held me in esteem. All that does not make me wish to better my fortune. No, Beloved, so long as I can count you mine, I wish nothing more; all the favours of kings are useless to me. The King's interview with our Prince was very dull, for both are men of few words. Yesterday the Prince went to see His Majesty in his camp. I did not go in his suite; but to-morrow I attend him to the Elector's, and I will give you an account of that. Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony is the dupe of all; he is cheated in his horses, and money is won from him at cards; he has already lost one thousand pistoles. He has no one to advise him, and is being ruined. I heard to-day that Prince Christian is to marry the widow of the Duke d'Arenburg."

"On the 15th.

"I went yesterday to the grand army. We waited on the Elector of Bavaria, and then we joined the King, who was walking in the camp. There was a great concourse of people of quality, but no very distinguished-looking men. The Brave Elector was most gracious to me, and his manner most kind and courteous. We shall soon join the grand army, and then I shall be able to tell you more news. The Prince [of Hanover] is much put about to know how to command his troops; it is obvious that he is unequal to the task of managing them.

"You ask me to reassure you of my love. I will never forsake you; so long as a drop of blood remains in my veins, so long as I draw breath, my heart is wholly yours.

confidential adviser, who created him Earl of Portland in 1689. He was in command of a regiment of Dutch Guards at the battle of the Boyne, and probably held the same commission in Flanders. Colt mentions in his despatches that Lord Portland was with King William at Brussels and during the campaign.

You are all my wealth, my treasure; I would sacrifice the world to kiss your divine mouth. I hate war and everything which takes me from your side. One favour only I ask of the gods—that I may be with you always, in life and in death. I beg of you to tell me if my portrait is as much pleasure to you as yours is to me; I want to see it in writing. Your picture is my only consolation when I am low in spirits, when I think of sorrow and how far I am from you. It reminds me, too, of the happy moments I spent with my dear one; it makes me exclaim, ‘Ah! moments of rapture,’ and I thank you again for the very memory of them. Angel! I am thine only, body and soul; my heart is filled with thy charms, mine eyes are blinded with the brightness of thy beauty.”

“[*On the 16th.*]

“What joy, what rapture, what delight to be loved by you! I have just received two more of your letters. No, my divinity, I will not exact any oaths from you; I know you well, and will trust you and believe everything you tell me. Your devotion shows me that I am the happiest man in the world. I feel so happy; my only sorrow is that we are separated. The days seem weeks to me, the weeks like months, and the months centuries; and when I think that I have still two months of campaigning to go through before I see you, I despair, and pray a thousand times a day that I may be wounded in the fight, and so have a pretext for returning to Hanover—and to you. I am so despondent that I am wasting away; and what grieves me most is the thought that when you see me again you will find me as ugly as sin. The Elector told me so only to-day, and all my friends find me so pale and careworn they scarcely recognise me. Every day they ask me if I am ill; but my complaint only

comes from loving you. Cruel little one! You think I am so hasty that I would commit some folly on the strength of a mere suspicion; but, dearest, when a man loves as I love, he can never abandon the woman he adores. I loved you through it all, so think no more about it."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"CELLE, July 28 / August 7.

"I, too, ask your pardon for all my unjust suspicions; I would not for worlds have been in the right. I am at a loss for words to express my joy at finding you still so tender; but, indeed, there is a little laziness in you, and it is very good of me to forgive you so easily for the three posts you let pass without writing. Tell me what hindered you; I should like to know. Find me a good excuse, for, really, your neglect rankles in my heart. I am greatly vexed that two of my letters are lost, for if they reflect at all what I am thinking, it will not be difficult to guess that they are written by me. You do not understand what I meant to say about the portrait. I did not mean to speak of mine, for I am sure you will have greater care for all that concerns me than I have myself. It was about yours I was uneasy. You say you are going to have a copy made of it; for whom do you intend that copy? I thank you for giving me leave to go to Wiesbaden; you can do so without any risk, for I so belong to you that you have nothing to fear. All the same, without your consent I would have died rather than have gone, for my only desire is to please you. The Duke and Duchess [of Hanover] have written to me the kindest, most affectionate, and politest of letters concerning the journey. I do not know if I shall be able to receive your letters as quickly as if I were remaining

here; I hope so, for they are my only joy and comfort—the least delay grieves me greatly.

“It was so thoughtful of you not to go to Brussels. However, do not restrain yourself; I have no wish to be *exigeante* so long as you cherish me in your memory. I am too happy, too pleased; but keep your heart whole for me, and do not allow any one to divide it. I am delighted that you are, for once in your life, satisfied with me; were you reasonable you would always be so, for all I do goes to prove my love and devotion. I do not know what you are doing, perhaps very often thinking of me. I dream of you often, and with infinite pleasure, thinking I am with you; then I awake and am inconsolable to find it was only a dream. I cannot delude myself into thinking the vision may soon become a reality, for the Prince writes to me that they are going to raise the siege of Namur. What terrors that news has for me! *Grand Dieu!* I think of you exposed to danger. How can I keep calm when all that I love, all the delight of my life, is in deadly peril? I offer endless prayers for you, keeping a good heart while saying them, trying to believe they will be granted. Farewell.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE BATTLE OF STEINKIRK

I have loved you; yea, when I rode in war
Your face went floated in among men's helms,
Your voice went through the shriek of slipping swords.

SWINBURNE, *Chastelard*.

"**I** OFFER endless prayers for you," writes the Princess to her lover. He had need of them, for even while the ink was wet Königsmarck was fighting in one of the fiercest battles of the century. The battle of Steinkirk took place on August 3, 1692. William surprised Luxemburg, and began the attack early in the morning while it was yet dark, and at first it seemed that he would succeed. The French general was off his guard, but with consummate skill he checked the advance of the Allies and called up reinforcements. All day long the battle raged without either side gaining advantage; the fight was so close and desperate that the muzzles of the muskets crossed. In the forefront of the battle were the British troops, commanded by Count Solmes, an incapable Dutch general. Though faced by overwhelming numbers, they would not yield an inch, and five fine British regiments were cut to pieces. Mackay's division of Highlanders was simply mown down with sword and bayonet. No wonder that afterwards there arose a great cry in England that English soldiers should henceforth be commanded by English generals. Had it not been for La Hogue, Steinkirk would have cost William of Orange his English crown.

At last, night drawing on, the army of the Allies retired towards Lambeque, leaving the French in possession of the field. The French lost seven thousand men killed and wounded, the Allies not many more; but the victory was with France. The French rejoicing at this barren victory was only equalled by the disgust of the Allies at their defeat. In the camp at Lambeque all was disunion and discontent; the sudden withdrawal of Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony (though Königs-marck puts it down to gambling debts) was due as much to political as personal reasons. The Hanoverian contingent was held in reserve as a possible reinforcement, and took no part in the battle, a forced inaction which must have been very galling to their general, Prince George Louis. Königs-marck obtained leave to go to the fight as a volunteer, and attached himself to the Prince of Würtemberg, "following him everywhere in the battle." The troops sent by the Duke of Celle were in the thick of the fray and suffered great loss.

The disastrous news reached Celle within two days. The little Court was plunged into mourning, and the Princess was in agonies of grief and anxiety lest Königs-marck should be numbered among the slain. In the general lamentation her emotion passed unnoticed, or was put down to natural uneasiness about her husband. Colt, who was then at Celle, writes: "The disappointment is great here, when by the news they had received last post they were almost confident of a victory, or at least some considerable advantage; but now, by the relation they have had by a courier, they are told that their troops have suffered very much, and many of their officers killed and wounded. Many persons are in great trouble at the loss of their friends."¹

¹ Colt's *Despatches*, Celle, August, 1692.

The Princess soon received tidings of her lover's safety, and with a good heart proceeded to complete her arrangements for the trip to Wiesbaden with her mother. They were interrupted by the unwelcome news that the Electress of Brandenburg was coming to pay the Duke and Duchess of Hanover a visit at Luisburg, and Sophie Dorothea feared that she would have to go there to assist in the festivities. "I dread that more than death," she writes, thus showing how great was her unhappiness at the Hanoverian Court. But her fears were groundless.

Königsmarck's letters continue to be written from the camp at different places, and are alternately full of passionate love and violent reproaches. They are more varied than those of the Princess (which are, indeed, so full of her love as to leave room for little beside), and give us curious glimpses of contemporary manners. Königsmarck was in high favour with King William, the Elector of Bavaria, and many of the princes and generals of the campaign. Undoubtedly his prospects were brilliant if he had cared to profit by them; but, like the Princess, he was ready to sacrifice everything to his passion. The period covered by this brief introduction is August and September, and the correspondence opens with the reception of the news of the battle of Steinkirk at Celle.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], July 29 / August 8.

"I learned on my awakening that a fearful battle has taken place and you were in it. Imagine my agitation. It was noticed by everyone, for I could not hide my feelings. I am in inconceivable anxiety. I cannot sleep, and shall not until I know you are out of danger. My

plight is pitiful: it seems to me that every gun is pointed at you; you must be running terrible risks. *Grand Dieu!* if any hurt were to happen to you, what would become of me? I could not conceal my grief nor be mistress of my emotion; I should start at once for the camp, hasten to give you all necessary care and attention, and never leave you more. My sufferings are intense. I know you have been going through great danger, but know not how you fare. I shudder, tremble, and am overwhelmed with woe. Do not expose me to such fears in the future—leave me no more. If it be true that you love me, spend the rest of your life with me; let us build up a happiness in each other which none can shatter. I have not the heart to write more; I am so beside myself that I hardly know what I am writing. You have caused me many tears since you went away; I fear me they will only cease to flow when you come back, for you will be exposed to danger all through the campaign. I hate King William, who is the cause of it all; he breaks my heart by thus risking all I have in the world. Good-bye. Take care of yourself. Remember my life is fused with yours; I would not live a moment were you to die.”

“[CELLE], *July 30/ August 9.*

“I am the most unfortunate and unhappy of women. No sooner is my mind at rest about your constancy than I am plunged into terrible fear for your life. I have not closed my eyes all night. I am so downcast and melancholy that every one pities me: indeed, I am to be pitied, for the man who gives my life all its happiness is in danger every moment; perhaps I shall never see him again. It will kill me; I cannot endure this suffering. I

shall surely not survive you. I implore you, in the name of the love I bear you, expose me not again to such anxiety, but leave me never more. I am weary of suffering so much. It is only right that you should give yourself wholly to me, for I have given myself all to you. My heart is breaking, I shall have no peace until I know that you are safe."

"Königsmarck to the Princess.

"FROM THE CAMP NEAR WAVERN.

"Here I am again. I have escaped once more. Our troops did not come in for any fighting, but I did, for I volunteered, and was in the most terrible fire. The Prince of Würtemberg got me leave (I followed him everywhere in the battle); but as I was only a volunteer I could not distinguish myself, and that grieves me, for I ran just the same risk as if I had been ordered to the front. The Duke of Celle has lost a great many men.¹ I will not tell you any more about the battle, for you will know enough from other sources. But, dearest, I will tell you that I received, while marching, your letter of the 18th, and after reading it, I put it next my heart and kept it there until I was out of the fight, and I believe it was your dear letter that saved my life. I am grateful indeed for the talisman, and adore you more than ever, since you have rendered me such a service. Until now, dear one, they have not sought to tempt me from you, nor have I even seen a woman; if I had she would have made no impression upon me.

"I must tell you of the precautions I took about your letters on the eve of the battle. I sealed them all, with the portrait, in a packet, and gave them to Daniell, an

¹ "This Duke here is really very much troubled for the loss of his troops in the late action."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

officer of my regiment, with strict orders to burn them at once if I were killed. But joy! I can still read them, and my eyes will have the pleasure of looking into yours.

"I have heard from Prince Ernest that the Electress [of Brandenburg] is going to Luisburg, and therefore I imagine you will go also; but pray keep to your strict rule of conduct, for you will be sure to find there some of your old admirers, who will try to win your good graces. The Electress will notice it, and to annoy us both she will try to entangle you in a flirtation with Le Barbouilleur;¹ but you have been so good that I am sure you will continue in the same path."

"AT THE CAMP OF HALLE, [undated].

"I have only now received your twelfth letter; it was given me with three others. You cannot fairly accuse me of having been negligent, and it grieves me that you should imagine the ladies of Brussels might hinder me from paying you due attention. Here are more grievances; but I forgive you, for of course you were unaware that I had not set foot there, and were it not for the bracelet, I assure I should not think of going at all. Play prevented me from writing the day before yesterday; and there I am in fault rather, the more so as yesterday I could not write because of the enemy giving an alarm; otherwise, my dear one, I should never have missed writing. Your letters were a great comfort to me; they came very *à propos*, for I got them when I came back from the King's tent, where I had lost a thousand pistoles, and, as that is a considerable sum, it was vexing me not a little, but your dear letters made

¹ *Le Barbouilleur*, the dauber, scribbler, babbler. He must have been some one holding high office at the Court of Hanover, but the key to this is lost.

me forget my trouble. Still I found in one of them something which tells me that if I were the man to break my vows you would easily be consoled. You are certainly very complaisant when you say: 'I fear that I weary you. Pray don't force yourself to write to me unless you can do so with a good heart. No doubt you have pleasanter occupations, and I would not be so unkind as to take you away from them.' If I were such a traitor as to change you ought to be grieved, and not beg me to divert myself, and not to restrain myself. But surely you did not mean it. It was anger that made you write thus. It is strange that you should not have received any of my letters. This is the fifth I have written to you from this camp, and I have not missed a post except the two before mentioned. I would scold you much were I not in the same plight as yourself; yet I have never prayed you to write to me no more. That shocks me much in your letter, and twenty times at least I have thrown down my pen as I thought of the wrong you do me. But I cannot better pass my time than in writing to you, though it be always in a strain of complaint. I have received a letter to-day from my agent at Antwerp, but without inclosing any from you; that adds to my sadness, for my only comfort is in reading your letters. I have little enough of it, for the whole of your letters I have received since I left Hanover could be read in half an hour. I often find comfort in sitting before your portrait, and if it could speak to you on my return it would tell of the passion with which I gaze on it for hours together, how often it brings tears to my eyes, how often I sigh, 'Ah! *mon Dieu!*' and, 'Oh! what joy for me to die!' I swear, my charming pet, that all day long I speak to no one; I only think of you, and often in the night your vision rises before my eyes.

. . . If you remain true to me you will no doubt make me turn into a sober citizen of Hanover, for, after all, one only seeks to be happy, and how could I be happier than in possessing you wholly and solely. There is a rumour here that we shall attack Mons; if that be so, keep the 'Festa.' If you are true to me, pray for me, besiege Heaven with prayers and vows; but if you are not true, then do not pray for me, for I would rather find my grave there—though, however untrue you might be, I would give much to see you again.

"In a previous letter I told you that there were very few distinguished-looking men in the train of the King or the Elector; but if I had seen the Duke of Richmond,¹ son of the Duchess of Portsmouth, sooner, I should not have said so, for he is the most charming youth. He unites to perfect manners an air of great distinction; he is well made, and has a handsome face and fine eyes. I only hope he may not become my rival; he is such a good-looking boy that if I were not sure of your constancy my chances would be very poor.

"You ask if any woman has tempted me to forget you. I vow that since I left Hanover I have not gone astray. My health is poor, but before I see you again I hope to be in such perfect condition that you may command me as you will. I go on my knees before your portrait and exclaim, 'I pray your pardon for my wicked suspicions. I see that I greatly wronged you, and am waiting for my sentence; it could not be hard enough for me to deserve.'

"The Prince allowed me to leave my regiment and go to the battle, with an order to come back soon; but as

¹ Charles Lennox, illegitimate son of King Charles II. by Louise de Querouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, was created Duke of Richmond in 1675, and is ancestor of the present Duke. He was born in 1672, and would therefore be in his twenty-first year at this time.

I was in the thick of it I did not return in a hurry. When all was over he said to me, 'You were away a very long time,' but he said it very nicely. I went to dine with him yesterday, and found him as usual."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], August 4/14.

"What joy to know that you are out of danger! One must love as I love to feel as I feel. I passed two days and nights in mortal anguish; no one ever suffered so much. And now two of your letters come at the same time. I am overjoyed with them, for you assure me that you are pleased with me and I need fear nothing on the score of your constancy. But I love you so dearly that I needs must scold you for having exposed yourself to unnecessary danger. What have I done that you should treat me so lightly? Ought you not to guard yourself for me? I should be grieved were you to risk your honour, but I cannot forgive you for doing rash things like a foolish boy; I entreat and implore you do not commit any more of such follies. What would become of me were I to lose you? Do you never think that my life is bound up with yours, and I would not live a moment if you were to be killed? I hope the campaign will soon end, for if they are going to attempt anything fresh I shall die of terror lest some hurt befall you. I don't know what the Elector [of Bavaria] could have been about with his eyes to have thought you 'as ugly as sin.' Had he seen you with mine he would have found you the most charming and the handsomest of men. No one can dispute the palm with you, and however many wonderful things you may tell me about the Duke of Richmond, I am sure he must pale in comparison with you. You would have no reason to fear him were he to 'become

your rival,' for he would only pave the way for your triumph. Neither he nor any man in the world could please me after you. I could pay you any number of compliments of this sort, but I fear to offend your modesty, so I will stop.

"The Electress of Brandenburg will not come for some time, and I shall be gone before she arrives. Our escort on the journey are not dangerous. You may rest easy: they are only my mother's two pages and Verfuy. When we meet you will find me more faithful and loving than ever; be the same, I implore you. Let me thank you for taking such precautions concerning my letters and portrait; but they were unnecessary, for had you fallen, my grief would have discovered everything. I should not have had the strength to restrain myself; and, indeed, it would have been immaterial to me whether I was lost or not, for without you life would be intolerable, and imprisonment within four walls pleasanter than to go on living in the world.¹ Thank God, I am now free from such sad thoughts, and I make many prayers not to come again to such straits.

"All the Court to-night complimented me on my cheerfulness. The fools thought the Prince was the cause of it; but, to tell the truth, I have not once thought about him. I cannot tell you the delight I feel because, at last, you are pleased with me. Let it be so always; and the more you know me the more you will love me. The love I bear you will last till death, and all the powers of the universe will never part us. If you could peep into my heart at this moment and behold the confusion you cause there, you would be satisfied. You are fascinating, loving, faithful—what can woman wish for more? My happiness is beyond compare, and I have only one wish

¹ In view of subsequent events this is almost prophetic.

left in the world—to see you soon. Would you were with me at this very moment! When once I hold you again I will never let you go. Good-night. It is late. I am fain to end, though I have so many more things to say that my words will never tarry. Be all mine, I implore you. As for me, I live only for you. I am grieved that you are not in good health. I thank you for the care you take of yourself, and, though I am surprised at it, I am grateful, as I ought to be. Goodbye.

“I *cannot* end. I take so much delight in writing to you that I could spend the whole night at it. La Confidente is going to sleep; I must send her to bed. Love me as I love you. I am too happy for words.”

“[CELLE], *August 5/15.*

“My mother, who has just left me, tells me it is quite true there will be another battle. If I had not been in bed she would have noticed the shock her news gave me; I have not got over it yet. Again I am in mortal terror, and can only write of my sorrow to-day. It is agonizing to think of your being perpetually exposed to danger. Am I destined to sorrow all my life? Shall I never be able to taste quietly the joys of loving and being loved? I long for news of you on the morrow. I shall spend a sleepless night.

“My father and mother have just interrupted me. I was writing this letter, and it was all I could do to hide it; it would have astonished them if they had seen it. They are very considerate and kind, but are always preaching to me to behave properly to the Prince. My father will not hear any jokes or ridicule at his expense, and therefore I do not speak to him as much as I should otherwise do. If you only knew how weary I am, you would never have the cruelty to leave me again. But I

must not think of this; I must make up my mind to divide your heart with your love of glory. You have all mine. There is no room in it for any one or anything—the desire to please you fills it entirely. I love you far more than you love me. Farewell. It is my desire to become an example of the tenderest love, the most perfect constancy, that ever existed since the world began.

“*L'Envoi*.—I have just received your letter. I deserve to be scolded, it is true; but how can I guard my words when I fear losing you, when I love you to madness? I would rather die over and over again than cease to be loved by you. You are right in thinking it was anger made me write the words that wounded you: I cannot be reasonable when I love so passionately. I will write to you fully to-morrow. I have no time to say more now, as my father is coming to take me to a ‘bull-bait,’¹ the same as they have in England. It is not necessary for me to assure you again that I shall never change. If there be any vows left I would sign them with my heart’s blood.”

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“HALLE, *August*.

“I again ask your pardon for all I wrote in haste. I missed the post *twice* (not *three* times, as you say) for good and sufficient reasons. Still, I ought to have left all to acquit myself of my duty to you. My dear, I own

¹ Bull-baiting was a popular pastime in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, patronised by royalty and persons of rank. Queen Elizabeth gave one in honor of the French ambassadors in 1559, and the Queen and the ambassadors greatly enjoyed “the sport,” which Hentzer thus describes: “There is a place built in the form of a theatre, which serves for baiting of bulls and bears; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bulldogs, but not without risque to the dogs from the horns of the one

my fault, so I hope you will forgive me; I will not neglect writing another time. . . . You make fun of me when you say that I took away a copy of my likeness. I swear that I never did such a thing. I went yesterday to Brussels to have the bracelet and the portrait made, but for nothing else. Prince Christian and several other of my friends wanted me to go to the Assembly. I refused, and went for a walk. I saw La Reingrave, La Delvassine,¹ and other ladies, but they were so dull and unattractive that I mounted my horse and rode back to the camp. Indeed, my dearest, I find those ladies hideous now, though they pass for the handsomest in Brussels. What are they compared to you? Two years ago I thought them passable, but now I am astonished at my bad taste. They are as pale-faced and sickly as if they had had the fever; pallor is very fashionable in Brussels.

"How sweet is that part of your letter in which you say that if an accident had befallen me you would have hastened to my side and have never left me more! Why wasn't I riddled with bullets? Why couldn't those cowardly Frenchmen catch me? We are going to undertake something again soon, and then I will face the fire, and with intrepid courage brave the enemy. I will seek the most perilous places, and if I get wounded I shall hope to see you, hold you in my arms, and tell you how dearly I love you.

"I hear that your father is going to Luisburg; if so, and the teeth of the other, and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot. Fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired." This barbarous pastime was also practised as late as the reign of Queen Anne, and was very popular, too, in market towns and rural villages. But these bull-baitings drew such a mob of low and dissipated persons together that they were at last abolished in the interests of the public peace.

¹ Two beauties of Brussels.

you will probably be one of the party. Pray tell me your plans, for I know not where to write, nor when to see you. They say our troops will be quartered at Louvain or Dist; in that case I shall be nearer you. If your mother were still away at Wiesbaden, I might hope to see you without its being known; but what I fear most is that the Court of Celle will be at Epsdorff. In that event I shall lose patience, for you will be there a long time, and what shall I do at Hanover without you? I must tell you an ugly story about the Duke of Richmond; he was giving a party to Duke Frederick of Saxony and some women.¹ . . . I have altered my good opinion of him. Duke Frederick has promised me to come to the next carnival at Hanover, and you can easily guess why I press him. Is it to make me happy or unhappy? I say no more. Monsieur Kielmansegge is very anxious to go back to Hanover, and if His Highness asks it of the Duke they will allow him. I give you this piece of news as I am sure it will please you. . . . The Electress of Brandenburg is sending me compliments through Prince Ernest. I don't know what she means; perhaps she wishes to become your rival. How we should laugh at her! Farewell, dear heart."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], August 6/16.

"I could not have carelessly allowed *three* posts to go by without sending any news to you, and when one loves to madness it is hard to be calm. I crave your pardon for all I wrote that has displeased you; you are right to attribute it to anger. Had you forgotten me, whatever I may have said, I could not have borne it quietly, for I claim you as *all* mine. I would stand up for you against

¹ This anecdote is unfit for publication.

the world. Pardon me, then; for what I wrote only came from excess of love.

"I am not astonished at Duke Frederick's indiscretion; it is so common to all men that I think you are the only one exempt from it. I should like to know whether you are not a little angry about La Marionette's complacency; it takes a good deal off the price of the favours she granted you. I felt a malicious joy with regard to that adventure. Put it against my account. I should much like to know what she says about Ferdi.¹ The Prince has answered my mother about my going with her to Wiesbaden; he leaves everything to the Duke, and says neither yea nor nay. He tells me the same thing, so we shall start in two days from now. I have already told you the Duke is quite agreeable. My father stays here,² and Max is going to visit the Electress of Brandenburg; she will not come just yet. Since you don't wish me to go anywhere except to Wiesbaden, I will avoid Frankfurt, and will try all I can to prevent my mother from going. She has determined to take me herself, or send me there to see the fair; but I will give it up, for I wish all my actions to mark my love and show my desire to please you. I will write to your sister³ and tell her of our journey. I have not done so before because it was not settled, but I fear it will be too late for her to join us. You were not wise to wish her to keep watch over

¹ Ferdi—*i.e.* Ferdinand, a favourite of the Electress of Brandenburg, probably a nobleman at the Court of Berlin.

² "This Court will the next week remove from hence: the Duke to follow his hunting, and the Duchess goes to Wiesbaden, near Mayence, for her health."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

³ The Countess Aurora, who was then at Hanover. Many of the letters passed through her hands, though they were sometimes sent direct.

me. If I wished to deceive you, neither she nor anybody could prevent me. But let your mind be at rest; I would rather die a hundred deaths than suffer the thought to cross my mind.

"I could not finish my letter this afternoon. I had to make some calls with my mother, and on coming home I learned that the Electress of Brandenburg will be at Luisburg next week; she has already sent a list of her suite, so no doubt she is coming. I am vexed about it, for I was looking forward to going to Wiesbaden—more for the purpose, I assure you, of shunning the world than of seeking it. I am uncertain what will happen now. I may be compelled to go to Luisburg, and I dread that more than death. The Electress will be sure to spy on me, cross-question me, and watch all my actions, and she will find me so different from what I used to be that she will guess the reason. Never mind, this is the least of my cares. Prince Max is going the day after to-morrow to meet her, and will accompany her to Luisburg.¹ If I do not receive any letters commanding me to stay, I shall start on Tuesday."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HALLE, July 31/August 9.

"Tell me how long you will be away and if the arrival of the Electress of Brandenburg will prevent you from carrying out your plans. Farewell, dear heart. I know a prisoner who longs to burst his bonds to seek your arms, but there must still be weeks of patience. How I am to be pitied! I have received a present from the

¹"The Electress of Brandenburg is passing by here on her way to Luisburg, where the Hanoverian Court is at a country house."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

French army—one hundred bottles of the best champagne; I will not drink a glass except to your toast."

"HALLE, [undated].

"So far from forgetting you, I only think of you, and I study all possible means of seeing you again. To that end I arranged with Monsieur de Goritz, if the battle had been victorious to us, to have borne the good news to our Court, and so perhaps to have had the joy of seeing and embracing you; but, my dear angel, Fortune did not favour my plan. All these accidents about the letters make me wretched. I am grieved at your anxiety on that account, but you accuse me unjustly, and, in turn, I claim you will ask my pardon as I did yours."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], August 8/18.

"I should have died with joy if you had come as you thought of doing; and, though you did not come, I am grateful to you for having had the thought. I am so absorbed in my love that I am becoming insensible to everything else; nothing can please me but to see you again and spend my life with you: as long as that cannot be, I shall always be wretched. I have already asked your pardon for the wrong I did you; I do it again, since you wish me. I am delighted to be wrong, and only wish I had always been so mistaken. I, too, know a prison waiting for my prisoner with great impatience. If I told you all my troubles, all my sorrows, I should make you weep. My trip will last six or seven weeks. I hope we shall both return [to Hanover] about the same time. I must not see you the first time in public: my emotion would betray me. They still say there will be a second battle; it makes me tremble. I have not slept for many nights,"

and am rather unwell. I think it comes from loving you overmuch, but that is such a sweet sickness I do not wish to be cured. I shall write to you as often as I possibly can, but do not blame me if you do not get my letters.

"I leave to-morrow. The Duchess Sophia has just written to my mother to say the Electress is coming, but as she wishes me a pleasant journey I no longer fear having to remain."

CHAPTER XVII

THE VISIT TO WIESBADEN

Why now do pangs of torment clutch thy heart,
Which with thy love should make thee overjoyed?

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

THE Electress of Brandenburg did not go to Luisburg after all. Elaborate preparations had been made for her reception, for Duke Ernest Augustus was anxious to gain his powerful son-in-law's support for the coveted Electorate, and so wished to treat his daughter with special honour. But the Elector of Brandenburg hung back, and at the eleventh hour the Electress changed her plans, to the great chagrin of her parents. By this time Princess Sophie Dorothea was well on her way to Wiesbaden, where she stayed with her mother for some weeks. Before returning to Hanover she visited the Frankfort fair. Frankfort was even then a place of considerable importance, and the annual fair was a carnival to which all the great world flocked from far and wide. It was very natural for the Princess to wish to see it when she was so near, and she hardly merited Königsmarck's reproaches for going. She writes to her lover *en route* to Wiesbaden:

"EINBEC,¹ August 12/22.

"I am writing haphazard; but I cannot exist any longer without assuring you that I love you, and absence only increases my passion. I am not telling you everything

¹ Einbec, a little town on the road.

that has happened every day, for I fear my letter might be lost, and then all the different places I should have to name would disclose everything. I will send you a list when I arrive, if anything worth mentioning takes place. I think of you from morning to night; it is my only occupation and pleasure. I am so delighted to think I am getting nearer the time when we shall meet again. I have no end of dreams concerning that meeting; they are pleasant, though impossible. I am told you are losing money at play. I am grieved, but one cannot be lucky in everything; your gains in love must console you for your losses at cards. I hope you will return [to Hanover] about the same time as I do."

"[WIESBADEN], *August 21/31.*

"I reached here last night after twelve days' journey, which seemed as many centuries, because I could not hope to have news of you while we were travelling. I am hungering for your letters, and hoping that I shall have some to-morrow. Nothing took place on the journey worth mentioning, nor did I see a face worth remembering. I did nothing but eat, drink, and sleep, and I played cards sometimes with my mother. It is hardly worth while to send you an account of what I did every day, and, besides, as I said before, I should have to name the different places I passed through, and that might reveal everything. The prudent Confidante advises me to do nothing of the kind; but if you do not trust me, I will send it, in spite of all. We are quite alone; the house is like a convent, and there is no one here but ourselves, so you can be at rest. But if *tout le monde* were here you would have nothing to fear: I am yours only. I wrote you once on the journey; I am sorry I could not do so oftener. About a league from Wiesbaden a courier

came to me with a letter from La Marionette.¹ I am sending you a copy of it, and of another which she inclosed from her brother, who is with the army. I am much surprised at their contents. I don't know what object the little woman has in worrying me, for I have never thought of her nor her brother. Perhaps she wishes me to come to harm, so that she may have you all to herself; but she mustn't think she has to deal with a fool who gives herself away to the first man who comes along, as she does. My love for you is the joy and happiness of my life, the only love I have ever felt for any one; it will die with me.

"The Prince writes to me that another battle will shortly take place. Think of the sorrow his news causes me, for my life is bound up with yours. I hope God will answer the prayers I make for you; I say them with a pure heart: you make me quite devout. You are right in saying that it is misery to live absent from the loved one. I experience that truth every day, but I hope to be rewarded for all my trouble and sorrow when once I hold you in my arms. You will be very clever if you escape me again. I am thinking of the moment when I shall see you, and the thought fills me with transports of joy. I believe I shall die of rapture—pray God it may be so. My love is above everything: *I worship you.*

¹ *La Marionette* was a German princess, probably a princess of Hesse. The mention of her brother being "with the army" refers not to the campaign in Flanders, but to the fact that on the Upper Rhine, and along the frontier which separates France from Piedmont there was a desultory war being carried on in connexion with the Palatinate. The letters mentioned are two, one from *La Marionette* commending her brother to the Princess and expressing a hope of meeting at the Frankfort fair, and the letter inclosed from her brother, containing extravagant expressions of his admiration of Sophie Dorothea.

"They tell me the Electress of Brandenburg has postponed her visit.¹ She was to have arrived two days after I left. All the horses were ordered for her equipage; the Duke had given up to her his apartments at Luisburg, and they also brought music,—all that for nothing! They say her husband wished her to put off her visit until another time, but I feel sure she will not come; the postponement is only a pretext. It will make the Duke and Duchess very angry; in fact, it is mocking them, but it matters very little to me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"FROM THE CAMP OF NINOVE, August 13/23.

"For five days I have not received any letter from you; but I know you are travelling, and that explains it. I hope to have news from Wiesbaden, for you can make no excuse about the post there. I am grateful for your anxiety about me when in the battle; it shows you have some fragment of love left for me still. But perhaps it would have been better for me to have been shot while fighting, for, though I am sure of myself, I cannot be sure of you. I know not if all they tell me about you is true. Your journey is much against my wishes, and I have taken a resolution which will astonish you greatly. On your love depends all my happiness; but, alas! it is like building on sand. But I cannot change my nature, and, however much I may try, I cannot root out my love for you. If ever there was a woman worthy to be loved, that one is surely you. I have one thing in common with many men—'I love a charming being, who is loved by many.' That is from a song, and I give it you for

¹ "Just now we have the news that the Electress of Brandenburg doth not come so soon as she intended, all things having been provided for her."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

what it is worth; it does not come out of my brain,—that, alas! is too much worried with cares, jealousies, sorrows, and anxiety to be able to invent anything witty or clever. Farewell. I crave your forgiveness if I suspect you without cause.”

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“WIESBADEN, August 23 / September 3.

“I should like to know why you are angry and who has been telling you tales about me. I am greatly wounded by your want of confidence. If you trusted my love, and believed me incapable of treachery, you could not so easily credit all these silly tales.

“It puzzles me to tell you any news; we continue to be quite alone. You will see from my note yesterday that I have seen a few silly faces—happily only for a little while, for they left again the same day. I really enjoy being alone; it is as pleasant to me now as it might have been unpleasant formerly. It is you who have worked this change, and I can assure you it is not your least glorious achievement; in truth, people bore me and are in my way; solitude is far more to my taste. I am no longer equal to conversation; you fill my thoughts too much to leave my mind free.

“I have had a letter from the Duchess, who tells me the Prince is aware of everything said of him; she also tells me about the Cabinet, and that the Prince has written begging that all who invented the slander should be punished.¹ I don’t think he is over-pleased, but it is immaterial to me.

¹ This may have some reference to Moltke’s plot, in connexion with which Duchess Sophia was examined by the Cabinet. *Vide* Colt’s *Despatch*, August 29, 1692: “The Duchess of Hanover hath been examined in several articles before the Duke and his Council.”

"I hope, to-morrow, to have another of your letters. I shall not be able to sleep all night, for I am not satisfied with your last. I have just read it over again. You attribute my anxiety for you to come safely out of the battle to some 'fragment' of my love. So far from being a *fragment*, it is the result of the most ardent devotion ever felt by woman. In all you say there is a coldness that freezes me to the heart. I am pierced to the soul. But I take some comfort in the thought that if you were wholly indifferent to me you would not be so sensitive. I would rather you were so hard, mortifying though it be, than that you should be indifferent. I am going to bed now, but I cannot get you out of my head; waking or sleeping, you are always in my thoughts. Good-night. You are the most perfect man in the world, but you are never satisfied,—that is your only defect. Cure yourself of it, and be all mine."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"FROM THE CAMP AT DENISE, August 21/31.

"I am glad you say that if any hurt befall me you will not abandon me. I almost wish I could see you again without my legs if it would give me the joy of holding you always in my arms. But you need not fret yourself; they are losing all hope of doing anything in this campaign, and it must soon end. Therefore, resume again your merry looks and lively airs; tears and sadness do not agree with fairs and baths. It is true I am not so exact in writing as you. I will not dispute the point; I know you cannot always write, for sometimes you are prevented by other distractions. Alas! if you were to find real pleasure in loving and being loved you would be the most satisfied of women. I should have believed you had you said your heart was without passion, save the passion for journeys; but I must be pleased, pro-

vided the journeys do not let other passions enter in. This is what I have to fear. Ah! if you only mean what you say when you write, 'It is my desire to become an example of the tenderest love, the most perfect constancy that ever existed since the world began'!

"I assure you what Duke Frederick Augustus told me about La Marionette made little impression, for before that I was disgusted with her; her ways show the sort of woman she is. I have not yet even mentioned you to him. He cut himself with a sword and made a large wound in his head, trying to cut the head of one Montrany. I call upon him every day. He is most uncomfortable and dirty in his bed; all the bandages are swathed round his head, and, with that terrible mouth of his, he looks a very disagreeable object. But he is a good sort of prince. I wish he would become Elector, I should have a very good time. My sister Aurora is already at Hanover; I think both my sisters will soon join you. . . . The Electress of Brandenburg will not go, after all, to Luisburg, and the Court will soon be at Hanover. You heard about Ferdinand's affair some little time ago. Not only did he lose all his money, but he owed two thousand pistoles. The Huguenots who had won it from him could not get it, so they went to the Prince of Anhalt and demanded that they might be paid. The Prince sent orders to the illustrious lover to pay his debts before leaving Berlin. But Ferdinand, in a rage, went and told the Electress, and she was so annoyed at the affront offered to her fancy man that she sent word to the Prince of Anhalt that she was astounded at the liberty he had taken, and she would complain to the Elector, and so on. The Prince begged her pardon. I believe Ferdinand's mistresses will find some means of satisfying his creditors and of getting him out of the

scrape. But the funniest part of the story is to come. The Electress determined to take Ferdinand with her to Luisburg, but his acknowledged mistress begged her to leave him behind and she would pay the debts. The Electress replied with determination that she kept Ferdinand for *her* pleasure and when she tired of him the other could do as she pleased, but until then she would keep him well. There is a happy man! As for his mistress, she may comfort herself, for the lover remains [at Berlin] and the Electress remains.

"I am waiting with extreme impatience for your news. If, haply, you have arrived, I hope my prayers will protect you from misfortune, and that you will compass your journey in perfect health. Since there seems so little chance of getting anything substantial from your parents, I do not see why you should be afraid of them, or why you flatter them, for everything that is to come to you after their death will come to you without that, so you can easily spare yourself the trouble. But you are very timid—so much the worse for you! They would be silly if they gave you anything when they see you are contented with fine words. I have won a thousand pistoles, but I may lose them again. The King has asked me to play with him in the Elector's tent, where he is breakfasting; but I don't know if my rage will let me go, for I am in the very devil of a rage. I am yours until the tomb."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"WIESBADEN, August 24 / September 3.

"Yesterday I received two of your letters, one very different from the other. One filled me with ecstasy. If I had held you in my arms I could have devoured you with kisses then and there. I will begin by answering all the

nice and charming things you say, and then I will scold you for so easily believing all the lies they wrote to you about me. I deserve more than a little of the love you show me, for nothing equals my devotion.

"I have long ago forgiven your carelessness, though I did not get your letter until I had been *three times* to the post without finding any, not *twice*, as you say; but when your letter came it gave me such joy that I forgot all my sorrow and anxiety of a fortnight. One kind word from you is enough to bring me back from that other world of grief and pain.

"Since you went away I have found existence so wearisome that I have longed for death to put an end to the sorrows and troubles which, as you know, are many and threaten to overwhelm me. I hope you will not be foolish enough, or brave enough, to get wounded for the sake of seeing me the sooner. I would rather wait a long time than any hurt should befall you, though, believe me, I am so eager to embrace you that I am ill with longing. What you ask kept me awake all night. What would I not give for the thing to be possible on your part! On my part it is easy, but I will say no more about it. We can never tell what the future has in store for us; but this I know—if anything should happen to you I should not survive it. If you had chosen a place to hide me from all the world you could hardly have found a likelier spot than this. It is away from all society, in utter solitude. At any other time I should have found it tiresome, for there is not a soul to speak to, and the people with us are anything but lively; but as I know your wishes it is a positive pleasure to be cloistered like this. It would have vexed me to find any man here: you would certainly have jumped to the conclusion that I came to seek him. I hardly know myself, and cannot understand how any

woman can have changed as I have done. As I have told you a thousand times, I think of you only, and count everything else as nothing.

"I hope I may not go to Epsdorff; the Prince's return may prevent me. I shall do all I can to get out of it, for I would not delay a moment the joy I would buy with my blood—to see you once more and to seal with my lips my vows of love. You are admirable about your Duke Frederick Augustus. A fine test you would put me to! I shall be sorry if you place me under an obligation not to look at him, though it is scarcely worth while, for surely you need not fear. You know full well that you are far above them all. You see, I am giving you back all the sweet things you tell me about La Reingrave and Madame Delvassine.

"But I am too long in justifying myself concerning your accusations in your other letter. Please explain, for I do not understand. You speak as if I had done something foolish, or, if I were too far away, I nevertheless wished to do it. If you did not receive my letters for a week it was not my fault. I wrote to you secretly from Celle by the post which was to leave after me, and I wrote to you on the journey. It is true I only wrote once, but it was impossible for me to do so oftener. You must have had the spleen very badly to wish you had been shot in the battle. I am anxious to hear what new fabrications they have told you about me; I cannot imagine what they can be. I am wholly innocent. I went over everything in my mind last night to see if any one could have given a crooked turn to any of my actions; but they have been all so straight that they could not have been maligned. The tale-bearers must have simply invented lies on purpose to make you quarrel with me. Alas! I see too well that they wish to estrange us, and

you are simple enough to fall into the trap. It is very hard that, however much I may strive to prove my love and devotion, you blindly believe all these foolish tales. I should be mad if I were to give you the least cause to complain about me, for I would rather die than do it. There is madness indeed in the passion I have for you. I cannot understand how any one can love as I love; you will never feel or experience it unless you 'build on sand,' as you say you do when you trust me. Only be to me as I am to you; I ask no other happiness."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"DENISE, September 3.

"I have received the letter you wrote from Einbec. I see in it, with much joy, that you have not forgotten me yet. I greatly wish, on your return, you may be able to say the same things to me; but alas! what have I not to fear? You always speak of my not exposing myself to danger, but you are exposed to the eyes of many handsome cavaliers. Who knows but that among the crowd at the fair you will see some one who may wound you. The sharper the attack the greater the danger. *Mon Dieu!* if you are wounded what shall I do? Where shall I turn? Why are you so lovely?

"I have just returned from a walk with the King. The Duke of Richmond was there, like a thrush, committing all kinds of extravagances. Duke Frederick Augustus has decamped without saying anything to any one. He owes more than fifteen thousand pistoles; I hold eight thousand against him. He leaves behind him many people who speak badly of him, but I have a great regard for him personally, though his conduct is devilish bad. As to having too much wit, he has none at all; he has not even won the approval of the ladies in Brussels. You

were right when you withheld him yours. The Elector [of Bavaria] went the day before yesterday to Ghent, which he likes better than Brussels. He finds the ladies prettier there, but as I have not seen them at either place I do not know whether he is right."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[WIESBADEN, Tuesday, 30.]¹

" . . . Perhaps I am mistaken, but I detect a vein of irony in your letter which is far from pleasant. I have no wish to see any cavalier, for you would surely think I came here because of him; but I need not have any uneasiness on that score at Wiesbaden, for there is not a decently dressed man about the place. You will have nothing to reproach me with about this journey, thank God; for I dread your criticisms. You are the most troublesome creature when you set about them. What matter even if there be a man within a hundred leagues of me? Why should you, the handsomest and most fascinating of all men, fear him? I cannot forgive your mistrust. You do not believe my promises or you would not perpetually worry me about my demeanour. If you could see the hole I am in even *you* would be satisfied.

"Here is my day: I played cards with my mother all the afternoon. I rested a long time on my bed. I went for a walk with my women. I supped, and I am going to bed. I hope you will be satisfied."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[undated.]

"You depict the place where you are as so dreadfully dull that I have not the heart to forbid my pet from being cheered a little. The Frankfort fair will give you some

¹ The beginning of this letter is missing.

amusement. I am sorry not to be one of your party. What about your mother? When will she take the road? and will she return with you to Hanover, or is she going to stay on at Wiesbaden? Those who wrote to me from Hanover only sent me the news of the place; they didn't mention you, therefore don't be angry, there are no tale-bearers, and if there were I should not believe them."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[WIESBADEN,] September 5/15.

"I am delighted to hear from you that the campaign will soon end; but it will not end as soon as I wish, for I am awaiting your return with an impatience which only equals my love.

"We are still alone here, and if any tell you the contrary they are very badly informed. I am going to the fair, and La Marionette has arranged for me to meet her there. My mother made me write and ask her to be at Frankfort the same time as ourselves. I implore you, do not get *ill*; nothing will take place there to make you so. I am grateful to you for giving me leave to do as I please; you know well that you risk nothing in granting me freedom, for I am incapable of abusing it. I know to the tip of my little finger everything I ought to do to please you, and I never fail in doing it. But can I be so sure of you? Shall I see you again as tender as before? I flatter myself, yes; but if it be otherwise I will not live a moment. I know no happiness in the world save the one of being loved by you; I ask for no other, for you are the source of all my joy."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"DENISE, September 10/20.

"When you have read my previous letter you will see

I have had very little correspondence at Hanover with any one concerning you. The fear our affair may be discovered makes me go with a bridle in my mouth, and I have few acquaintances to whom I would confide such a secret. I think the Duchess of Hanover answered the Prince very well; she is careful to support the Cabinet. She is just like the Countess Platen; I fear some day she will have the same power. . . . I have been looking forward to seeing you again soon, but the news from Hanover tells me that the Duke is going to hunt at Epsdorff, where your father is now.¹ The Prince is going there too, and, as the Duchess of Hanover is going to visit the Electress of Brandenburg, you are sure to be one of the hunting party.

"The Electress of Brandenburg has been in a great rage with Montalbany. She joked him at supper because people said he had such thin, lean legs. Next morning he waited on the Electress in her chamber, and she laughed at him again about the same thing. He lost his temper, and, kicking his leg up on the toilet table, said to her, '*Voilà, Madame*, all those who have told you such things have lied.' The page-in-waiting, seeing his impertinence had carried him too far, tried to make him retire; but Montalbany was in such a rage that he gave him a fillip which made the blood flow out of his mouth and eyes. The Electress flew into a furious passion, forbade Montalbany ever to see her again, and ordered him from her presence. But she did not long keep to that resolution, for one of his friends begged and prayed for him so hard that she made it up again. They say here it

¹ Colt mentions that the Duke of Celle was at Epsdorff (*vide Despatch*, September 15, 1692); and he was also there on October 7. On the 10th he went to Göhre.

was Ferdinand, and the scandal does much harm to that lady. Prince Ernest writes nothing of it to me.

"In one of my letters the news from Hanover tells me that my two sisters have gone to Wiesbaden. I fear they will find you no longer there, which will be a disappointment to them, as they looked forward to paying their court to you at Wiesbaden, since there is so little chance of their doing it elsewhere, except at Celle. It is annoying, for they would like to show their devotion, but have not the opportunity of doing so. . . . What shall I do if you go to Epsdorff? I shall not see you until the carnival; and I *must* see you, whatever it may cost me. Try to think how I can do so, and let me know of a plan. I should like to know, too, if you wish me to wear my own hair this winter, or whether you would rather see me in a wig. Your wishes will be my law in this as in other things; in the merest trifle I shall always study your sweet will."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[WIESBADEN], *September 11/21.*

"How happy I am to have a lover like you! The more I read your letters the more I am delighted with them. No one ever has such noble qualities; no one could imagine a more gracious lover. I am *so* grateful to you for giving me leave to go to the fair.

"Last night I received La Marionette's answer. She will be at Frankfort the same day as ourselves. What would I not give for you to be with us! I should die of joy. Nothing can equal the impatience I feel to see you again; but I must be patient, though it is very hard when one loves to distraction. I do not know yet whether there will be any one else at Frankfort. I shall write to you as soon as I get there and give you an account of

everything I do; but be sure that if all the delights and charms of the earth were at the fair you would fill my mind wholly, and I shall do nothing that does not show my love for you—a love beyond all that I can express. I defy the whole world to equal me in tenderness and faithfulness; and you deserve it wholly, for you are a king among men.

“La Confidente has been far from well the last few days, and I am anxious about her; but I hope the change will soon set her right, for this air is bad, and I am dying with impatience to leave it. Here are so many sick people that I fear I may become one of them myself. I should be so distressed if you were to find me ugly on your return that I would make up on purpose to please you. They say I am getting stouter. I am going to bed now, but I feel very lonely in it, for, since you left, how many prayers, what eagerness, what desire, to see you again! Good-night, my dear one. If I hold thee once again thou wilt never escape me more.”

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“DENISE, *September 16/26.*

“Since you have asked me to explain all I have against you I will make a clean breast of it;¹ four things, of which the last is the worst. The first is that you did not mention that you saw Spar at Celle. The second, it gave you great pleasure to meet Guldenlon at Wiesbaden. The third, although you assured me you did not care about going to the fair, you seize any pretext for going. You pretend it is because your mother wishes it! The fourth is the new rival [the Prince of Hesse]. He is near you, in his own country. His sister (La Marionette)

¹ Evidently in answer to the Princess's letter of August 24/September 3.

pleads for him. You are going to the fair, and he will be there with his *maquerelle*; and if he goes to Hanover, his old sister, who is the most cunning of women and well versed in intrigue, will be there too, on the pretext of a visit, to take him to your chamber, even though you were abed. I will not suffer such things; I would rather go to the Indies. It would not be pleasant for me to find a lover in your chamber, while I, who worship you, must not enter. But I forget, he is prince, and for that reason privileged by his rank. All the same, I yield him nothing. . . . I fear this letter would be offensive if I believed all I wrote; but no, dear angel, I know your virtue and your constancy, and so I warn you to be careful. Two women are with you, one of whom has already done her best to make you hate me—your mother. My dear Léonnisse (I give you that name, for it is that of an incomparable woman, if you are anxious to know whom, read the Duc de Bourbon's romance, *Prince de Tarante*), what should I do without you? I have met with a lot of bad luck in life, but at least I have had the joy of worshipping you, and from the first day I saw you my heart was touched, though I was only a mere boy and unable to declare my passion.¹ But even then I loved you, and I love you now. As my love for you was born with me, so to speak, so it will also die with me. Oh, Léonnisse! if you only knew how I worship you, you would freely excuse all the follies passion makes me commit and all the suspicions that take shape in my brain. The Elector [of Bavaria] swears at me about my gloomy temper, which he says I brought from Hanover. That is true; but I am the only one who knows the cause of my complaint, and the remedy. I am in a most piteous state night and day. I open my eyes only to weep, and my

¹ Another reference to their early friendship at Celle.

mouth opens only to sigh. You ask me to tell you the vow I have taken. It is to love you as long as a drop of blood remains in my veins, and though you may change to me, I shall never change to you.

"I have seen your first lover, the one you were on the point of marrying.¹ What a face! They tell me his wife is at Ghent, and the ladies of the place will not pay their respects to her, she gives herself such airs. She sees nobody; but you would have enjoyed yourself like a queen. Think how pleased I should have been, for you would only be two hours from me, and your husband in the army!

"Duke Frederick Augustus has left the army with very few honours; he owes money right and left. He left Brussels under a cloud, for he gave a powder to the first jeweller who dunned him which sent the poor man nearly mad. The rogue knew he was going to bolt, but he concealed his intentions and still made promises. The other day I dined with him at the Comte d'Egmonts, when he made me many hypocritical promises. That is the way young men go on nowadays; I give them a good sound talking to. The season is getting so cold that every one is beginning to speak about winter quarters."

Königsmarck to Fräulein von Knesebeck.

"You are right to think the visit to Frankfort would displease me, especially as I begged and prayed her not to go. However, all can be repaired if she only stops one day there. It is not fair. Did she not say she hoped I would not go often to Brussels? That was sufficient. I only set foot there for four hours for a game of tennis; I did not even go to Ghent. The wealthy marriage they proposed for me I rejected from the first.² I also refused

¹(?) The Prince of Wolfenbüttel.

² This marriage has been alluded to before—in 1691.

to undertake the journey of which you know,¹ though it was the only thing to save my property. Count Oxan-stern² assured me that if I had gone the King [of Sweden] would have made me an offer of a regiment with the title of general, and Marshal Hasbert also said that if I had attached myself to the service of the King I should at present be a general. Consider, dear friend, what I have sacrificed and what she is doing, and then say who is in the wrong. This is between ourselves, for I do not wish her to know about this at all, so pray don't mention it."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"GAVERN, October 4/14.

"I am extremely sorry to hear that La Confidente is unwell. I trust, however, that the gaiety of the fair will soon put her to rights. I am glad to see you are going to leave that unhealthy place (Wiesbaden) without being attacked by any complaint or illness. You need not be so very anxious on my behalf about your looks, for I could not find you more beautiful than I do already, and if you wish to 'make up' for me, I shall not see you for some time, and your visit [to the fair] will have fatigued you. Had you done so *after* your trip I might have flattered myself it was for me; but in any case your care will not be thrown away. The fine world of Frankfort will have the benefit, and you will have the satisfaction of finding yourself hated by the ladies of the city, for you

¹ The mission to Sweden; he went no further than Hamburg.

² A Swedish noble of high rank, sometime envoy at Hanover. This letter is very characteristic, and undoubtedly shows that Königsmarck had made sacrifices of his worldly prospects to be near the object of his devotion. But it was hardly generous of him to remind the Princess of it, even indirectly, for she had made a much greater sacrifice for him.

will surpass them all in beauty and take away their lovers. You have made so many conquests in so many different countries that I do not doubt for a moment that you will enjoy the same triumphs in Frankfort, and include that town in the list of your trophies. You seek the banks of the Rhine and the Maine for people to admire you and rave about you; but why do you not cast a glance towards this unfortunate country? Here are kings, dukes, electors, and princes ready to woo, and who of them could resist your charms?

"We arrived here after a march of thirty-six hours without a rest; some of our men fell from their horses, and others have the fever. Several wanted to entertain the Prince at Ghent: Goritz wanted to give him a dinner at his wife's, Ovenair wanted to give him a livelier one with loose women. They tossed dice for it, and Ovenair won. The Prince told me I could make one of the party. Monsieur Goritz goes to the Hague, the Prince starts the 15th, and Monsieur de Königsmarck goes to Brussels to cure himself if he can. Here in a few words is news you will not much relish; but, to finish with a *bonne bouche*, I vow to you with much submission that no one on earth could be your more humble servant than I."

CHAPTER XVIII

KONIGSMARCK RETURNS FROM THE WAR

Come back! from love of thee my soul is glowing,
Come back! without thee my sad heart is grieving,
Come back! for by thy absence, my beloved one,
Bewildered, bitter tears in floods are flowing.

HAFIZ.

THE Princess and her mother went to the Frankfort fair; but their visit was a brief one, and the Prince of Hesse was prevented from meeting them, so Königsmarck's jealous fears were groundless. From Frankfort the Duchess of Celle took her daughter back with her to Epsdorff, where the Duke was a-hunting. We find Königsmarck writing, "At present my greatest happiness is to know that you are at Epsdorff, and you are going to stay."¹ But the Princess remained there only a few days, as her presence was imperatively required at Hanover, where the Elector and Electress of Brandenburg had at last arrived on their long-expected visit, and were being entertained with every mark of honour. The Duke of Hanover was anxious to be invested with the Electorial dignity forthwith, and urged the Elector of Brandenburg to put pressure upon the Emperor.

The defeat at Steinkirk had sown discontent among the Allies, and many of them, including the Duke of Hanover, if he did not receive his dues, were ready to lend

¹ Königsmarck to the Princess, Ghent, September 11/21.

ear again to Louis. Colt writes: "Balati [the French envoy] is at last returned, bringing many fine things with him, especially for the ladies, and he says so many fine things of the French Court in public, besides what he doth in private, that I have met with much coldness from the Minister, Count Platen, and his lady, who govern all things here; and if I could speak with the tongue of an angel, and this Duke's interest were never so much on my side, it would avail but little, unless I did make some presents as they had from France."¹ The Duke, a born diplomat, temporised with France, and got what he wanted from the Elector of Brandenburg, who brought his visit to a close, well pleased, and departed with many expressions of good will. Two days later the Duke of Hanover went to carry the good tidings to the Duke of Celle at Göhre.

With all this important public business on hand it would not have been surprising if private and Court intrigues had been for the time overlooked; but it was not so. While the princes were busy with affairs of State, the princesses were no less concerned with family matters. In some way the intimacy between Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck had again attracted attention. Perhaps some of the letters miscarried (it is noteworthy that none of the Princess's letters from Frankfort are preserved), or the servants babbled to Countess Platen and aroused her jealousy afresh, or the Duchess of Celle, who narrowly watched her daughter while she was with her, discovered something and communicated her fears to the Duke. However that may have been, suspicion was aroused, and it was determined to prevent Königsmarck and the Princess from coming together again. Suspicion fell on Countess Aurora as an accom-

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, September 27, 1962.

plice in the intrigue, and Duke Ernest Augustus sent her a message to the effect that she would do well to avoid Hanover in the future. Königsmarck also seems to have received a hint that other princes might find his services more useful.

All this threw both the Princess and her lover into great alarm and agitation, though their fears, in either case, were not on account of personal danger (which was considerable), but lest they should be parted from one another. Much of this is told in the five letters that follow.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“[HANOVER], *September 25 / October 8.*

“It is not enough for me to be bowed down to the earth by the fear of losing you, but you must add to the *peine* by being dissatisfied with me. All the rest is nothing in comparison with this last affliction; it makes me oblivious to everything else. I can find no comfort anywhere. You reproach me with having met La Marionette [the Princess of Hesse] as arranged at Frankfort. I could not help going there; my mother insisted on it. Besides, I knew that the Prince was not coming with his sister; I thought him much farther away than he actually was. In any case, everything passed off so well that you are the most unjust of men if you are not satisfied. I did not see a single person there worth mentioning, as I have already told you. The person you sent to spy has doubtless informed you to the same effect, and I am hoping that the first letter I receive from you will give me as much joy as the last four have given me sorrow. They are all in the same strain, and I am desperate because you are so unjust. My life ought to show that my love for you is unequalled. I have ceased to take interest in

anything, and for this long while have sacrificed everything for you—to better prove I am worthy of your love.

“If I must give up seeing you, I will give up the world altogether. I cannot contemplate such a thing. Yet I fear I must be prepared for it, for the Electress of Brandenburg has told me that you will be sent away, but on some pretext which will not apparently concern me; she had it from Countess Platen. I cannot describe to you the state I have been in for the last four or five days; if grief could kill, I should surely be dead. I no longer sleep, I do not eat at all, and I am a prey to gloomy foreboding. It may be that time and absence will cure you of your passion, but mine will end only with my life. That is a truth time will show. I have your portrait. I cannot look on it without tears; I wish it might testify to the intensity of my sorrow and love. I fear many afflictions and misfortunes are in store. Le Barbouilleur is in league with Countess Platen and her cabal. He tries to harm Aurora in everything he possibly can, and went so far as to say to the Duchess Sophia that she was a ‘she-devil.’ I should hardly have believed he could have been so base a coward as that. I told you that he once began to show airs to me, but he did not go far; the anger I evinced soon stopped him.

“You say you are ‘going to Brussels to cure yourself.’ How can you have the cruelty to write such a thing to me—who am so sensitive and tender? Anger alone spoke when you wrote those words. You don’t mean to go. I know not yet by what mischance one of your letters was opened: La Confidente is trying to find out; fortunately you say little in it. But you tell me that they will force you to leave me. Let me know what makes you think so; reassure me in my trouble and anxiety.

My love is proof against all; I vow you an everlasting constancy.

"The Duke [of Hanover] went away this morning on a visit to my father.¹ He took only Le Barbouilleur with him. I believe the Duchess will follow, and I shall go with her, unless the Prince should arrive soon. . . . I have been interrupted at this point in an alarming manner. I thought I was perfectly safe, for I gave orders to say that I was asleep. I had your portrait quite near me, attached to a screen, and. . . .²

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[HANOVER], *October 10/20.*

"I have heard nothing from you for a week. I am in despair, for I have never been in such need of consolation as now. I still hope to receive a letter from you this evening, but if that hope should fail I know not what will become of me. I have endless things to tell you. I would give my blood to be able to tell them to you by word of mouth, but I see little or no chance of it. If you could come secretly I think the plan might succeed. I shall go to meet the Prince,³ but I shall be there only a few days; we shall return here together. The matter they are trying to arrange, and on which depends my visit to the Electress of Brandenburg, is almost settled. There seems to be no doubt that the investiture will take place in four or five weeks. Knowing your temper, I am

¹ At the Duke of Celle's hunting-seats of Epsdorff and Göhre. In his *Despatch*, September 30, 1692, Colt mentions that the "Elector of Brandenburg has gone home and that the Duke of Hanover is with his brother, hunting."

² The end of this letter is not to be found.

³ The Prince of Hanover had returned from the campaign to Luisburg.

not sure if you will approve of my visit. I can assure you I think only of how to escape from going; but it is very difficult, for I have not to deal with children, and in the present state of things it would be harder to make excuses than at any other time. Let me know your wishes, and think, too, of some sensible expedient, in case you should not wish me to go. The Prince has written a ridiculous letter, with an order to give it, from him, to Le Barbouilleur, with his compliments. I did nothing of the kind. La Confidente returned it to him without a word from me. He avoids me as much as I shun him. No one could spend a more miserable life than I do. I am in a perpetual state of terror, and, to crown all, your letters are so cold that they make me lose patience. I declare, every one conspires against me. Instead of loving me more firmly than ever, you overwhelm me with unreasonable complaints. Maybe you rejoice at the obstacles in the way of my happiness. While I am fretting my heart out here, and have not a moment's peace for fear they may part us for ever, you may be secretly tasting the joys of new conquests, without giving me so much as a thought. I am surprised that I still keep my reason, or know what I am saying. Persecuted as I am on all sides, tormented by anxiety on your account, I should not wonder if my brain were to give way. I have never deserved your love more than now. However bitterly you may reproach me, however much I may fear, nothing shakes my resolve to love you for ever, and to prove it to you all I can. They can hinder me from seeing you, but they can never keep me from being yours all my life long: you take the place of all to me. They told the Duke [of Hanover] that you moved to another house with your sister Aurora, and so sought to lure me to your place. Think of that! How they seek to ruin

you! I did not sleep all night thinking of our being parted for ever. I know now the agony of separation so well that I dread it more than death. Yet I believe with a little prudence and good behaviour one could remedy all these evils, but I would rather *speak* to you about the measures to be taken than write. When shall I have that bliss? It seems very far away. I am so uncertain about your feelings towards me that I hardly know what to think. It is my great anxiety, for were I sure of your love my sufferings would be much less. I am trembling as I write—I fear every sound; but I worship you, and as long as you love me I can console myself easily about all the rest.”

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“DENISE, *September 20/30.*

“We have sent our baggage on to Ghent, and as I am in need of paper, I beg your pardon for using loose pieces which I pick up from anywhere. I cannot hide from you any longer my fear that they will separate us soon. To tell you all. My sisters wished to go through Hanover on their way to ———. Marshal Podevils, knowing they had arrived at Hamburg, asked leave to go and see them. The Duke told him he knew my sisters were there, and he had been informed that Aurora wished to visit Hanover. He therefore begged the Marshal to tell her with his compliments that he had the highest regard for her, but she would do him a great favour in changing her plans, as she and all her house had witnessed their last carnival at Hanover.¹ My sister, astonished at such a message, which perhaps was never before sent to a lady of quality, begged Marshal Podevils in reply to tell His

¹ The Duke evidently thought the Countess Aurora was coming to Hanover for the carnival in the winter.

Highness that she had not expected such civility from a prince, or one who passed as such, and it was easy to obey his commands, as she had no intention of spending another winter in Hanover for the last visit gave her no longing to return. Her answer was smart enough, but I wish she had written it to Monseigneur le Duc, for Podevils will not tell it to him like that. You can see how far the power of that woman¹ goes; we all have to fear her. She was waiting for the Marshal after his interview with His Highness at Luisburg, and said to him: 'I know you are going to see Königsmarck's sisters at Hamburg, and they tell me Countess Aurora is coming to Hanover. I can allow her to return to Court if His Highness is willing to permit it, though we have no great confidence in her.' These are the exact words she used, and I do not know whether they mean that the Duke or the Countess has no confidence in her. I don't think Aurora cares much about the confidence of either; her greatest trouble is that she cannot pay her respects to Madame la Princesse. You will understand how these things worry and distress me. I have thought of writing to Marshal Podevils and begging him to tell me if this affair was doing me harm with the Duke, as I should have to take precautions, and adding that I expect him to do me this kindness as a good friend of our house; but as his answer would probably be to advise me to leave [the Duke's service], I have not carried out my intention without knowing your wishes, which are my law. If, however, you give me leave, you will see a fine row, for I will avenge myself on this insult in such a manner that the whole world will talk about it, though that pleasure would cost me dear, for I should have to leave you."

¹ Countess Platen.

"AFFLEGEN, October 6/16.

"I was hindered the day before yesterday from finishing my letter by the alarm that the French were going to attack Charleroy,¹ but it came to nothing, and therefore I am able to write now. As my previous letters seem to have upset you so much, I am dying to know what there was in them to offend you so greatly. You command me to make the *amende honorable*; I willingly do so. I am only too happy to find myself mistaken, and hope you will forgive me. The Prince of Würtemberg's affair must have prevented the Prince of Hesse from carrying out his intention of going to the fair. I have not heard who went to Frankfort, but I think that *ma chérie* has been badly rewarded for her trouble in going to the fair, for I hear very few men of quality were there. You are good enough to say if I find anything in your letters to vex me I must put it down to anger: of course, one must pardon anything from an angry lady, so tell me, I pray you, what shall I do to make it up with you? Command me and I will obey. My crime is suspicion. Surely it is only right and fair that I should tell you my fears, even though I may be in the wrong. I own I am wrong, and am ready to offer you any reparation. I have never sighed 'for fresh conquests' since I paid my court to you. To be sure of your heart is my only happiness and desire; but, Beloved, I cannot suffer any rivals. . . . All the treasures, all the pleasures, all the charms of the world will not lure me from the woman who has my heart. You may be sure that neither kings nor riches, neither

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Göhre, October 17: "We have just heard the welcome news that the French have failed in their design on Charleroy; they were for the most part sure here that Charleroy must be taken."

castles nor all the tortures of hell, would make me change."

"*Six o'clock, from CHARLEROY, October 10/20.*

"I sighed a long time for your letters. Two came yesterday. I opened them with joy, but gladness was soon changed to direst grief. My misery is so great that it will surely drive me to some desperate deed. I was so troubled and distraught that I did not notice yesterday that the King was looking for me in the crowd, and bowed to me. Monsieur Bülow warned me, otherwise I should not have seen him. The order that our troops are to go to the relief of Charleroy could not have come more *à propos*, for I shall seek death there, and so find relief from my troubles. Think only of yourself, and take every care that their suspicions may not get you into trouble. I implore you do this. I will bear all the disgrace with joy if only I see you out of danger. I will gladly be of all men the most miserable, I will give up the only woman I have ever loved in my life, I will leave the Hanoverian service, and so be deprived at one blow of my divinity, my calling, and my consolation. The North takes away from me the means of livelihood,¹ and even in play bad luck persecutes me. See to what plight I have come! I have borne ruin and disgrace with impunity, happy in the joy of being able to love you with a lasting love, but now I must live without you! I cannot do so. If I have to leave you I must leave life too. Charleroy will help me; there I will seek death to end my sorrow. . . . If death does not decide my fate, I will never abandon you—not even though I were poisoned, massacred, beaten black and blue, or burned alive. But I talk like a man who has lost his reason. I do not see

¹ The King of Sweden was threatening to confiscate his estates.

how in suffering all these insults I am gaining you. I am only drawing on you no end of trouble. I must give you up; but, if I must die, I will die avenging myself on those who are forcing me to abandon you.

“My greatest grudge is against La Platen, and on her I will avenge myself, for to her I attribute all my misfortunes. I will seek out her son, pick a quarrel with him, and send him to the other world. After that I will tell everybody how she persecuted me, tell them also all the foolish things I did with her, and then, if the Duke still shuts his eyes, the first time I meet her off her dung-hill I will insult her so publicly that all her life long she will never dare to show her face again. But how small is such revenge in comparison with the harm she does me! for she robs me of the only joy I have in the world. I lived only for *ma chérie*, I wore her chains with gladness; she was my joy, my divinity, my all. Imagine, therefore, the misery this jade of a Platen brings upon me! If I were lord of creation I would offer a sacrifice of her, and give her to the bears to eat; the lions should suck her devil’s blood, the tigers tear her cowardly heart out. I would spend day and night seeking new torments to punish her for her black infamy in separating a man, who loves to distraction, from the object of his love . . . I thought it very likely they would try to remove me because they egged on my sister Aurora to send so rude an answer to the Duke. But as to what you tell me from the Electress of Brandenburg, don’t you think she said it to see whether you would betray yourself; for I cannot believe that La Platen would have said that to her! Should the Duke come to hear of it she would be ruined.

“Your last letter of the 28th comforts me a little, for you say that you will always be faithful to me, and all these persecutions only serve to encourage you in that

determination. You give me back life. Should their plan of sending me away from you come to anything, we shall see what will happen. I do not see any way for you to make me happy unless you, some time or another, confide in your mother that your love and my removal would make you do something foolish. That fear will either make them keep me near at hand or send me to the other world. They are desperate remedies; but if one cannot hope, one fears nothing. I know not if my dear one takes my meaning.

"*L'envoi*.—The mischance with the portrait makes me tremble. If I see you again I will take care to be hidden. Is it possible that you think your assurances of love weary me? Your letters are the only joy I have. Continue to send them, I pray you, and be wise. I read the last word with as much joy as the beginning—if only you do not speak of my removal or of your going away for some time. The sweetest part of your letter is where you ask me to tell you what to do so as to obey. I entreat you, do not suffer them to part us; use every effort to prevent it, and if in the end it must be, *come with me*, following the fate of Léonnisie and her chevalier· it is the only real way for us to be happy."

The Princess's letters are now missing, and we are left to gather the substance of them from Königsmarck's epistles. Apparently the Princess did not approve of the desperate remedies suggested in his last letter. As Königsmarck often complains, she was of a timid disposition and not given to heroic measures. She was unwilling to take her mother into her confidence; she was not prepared to leave all and flee with her lover, except as a last resort, nor did she approve of his writing to the Field-marshal. She took counsel, it seems, with the

Electress of Brandenburg, who, she must surely have realised, had she reflected, was one of her worst enemies. The Electress does not appear in an amiable light in this affair. Like her mother and all her house, she hated and despised Sophie Dorothea, but, unlike her mother, her conduct was by no means free from reproach. Her intrigues were many and notorious, and she seems to have suspended her animosity towards her sister-in-law for a time in the pleasure it gave her to find that she had an *affaire* too, though there was no point of resemblance between her numerous light-of-love intrigues and Sophie Dorothea's one great and sincere love passion. The Electress advised her according to her lights. Sophie Dorothea was to temporise; to make her peace with Countess Platen, whose jealousy was at the bottom of the whole business; to advise Königsmarck to do the same, and all would be well. The advice was unworthy, but the unhappy Princess resolved to follow it. It seemed to her the only thing to be done, and anything was preferable to separation from her lover. In her new-found confidence with the Electress of Brandenburg she paid her a brief visit at one of her country palaces.

Meanwhile Königsmarck was trying in vain to obtain his leave and return to Hanover and his divinity; but on some pretext or another it was always refused. The campaign was now at an end. King William had gone back to England, the Prince of Hanover had left the camp, and all the electors and princes had departed their several ways. The Hanoverian troops were sent to the Garrison at Dist, into winter quarters, and Königsmarck with them. Impatient at the delay in getting his leave, he threatened to return to Hanover without it, though this would be tantamount to resignation, and so play into the hands of his enemies. He writes:

“JENAPPE, *October 25.*

“You know well that rather than do anything which might displease you, I would be torn into a thousand pieces. I will therefore *not* write to the Field-marshal, but obey your commands in this as in other things; it will always be a joy for me to do so.

“I cannot understand what it means about my sister Aurora wishing to estrange the ducal family. I am curious to know what she has done. Since you wrote so freely to Aurora, I hope you will tell her to burn your letters. The phrase ‘kind person’ in the mouth of La Platen has a hidden meaning; it is evident she suspects something without quite knowing what, for I am certain if she really knew the least thing she would not fail to inform those who ought not to know it. I do not at all agree with the Electress of Brandenburg’s advice. My soul would be very base to pretend submission to a person who is persecuting you. Were it not for your sake I would make her pay for all the harm she does to honest people. I cannot understand the Electress speaking so freely to you about me and La Platen. There is something hidden which I hope to discover.”

“LOUVAIN, *October 17/27.*

“I have arrived here at last, but have not yet got my leave. I don’t know what it means, for all the other officers who have asked have received it. I am determined, in case I do not get it, to demand my discharge. I may as well do so, since they seek a pretext of getting rid of me, and I can find again in the King of England’s service all I shall lose from giving up this. But what breaks my heart is that all the kings in the world will not console me for the loss of a goddess like you. Alas! what shall I do? If I enter that service I shall see you

rarely, and how shall I exist? No, that cannot be! I would rather attach myself to the King of Sweden, for at any rate I should be nearer at hand, and could find means of seeing you oftener."

"October 27.

"At last I have received three of your letters at once, and am greatly comforted, even though I see that all plot against me. I am more than satisfied with you, and I cannot understand how you got it into your head that you were forgotten—you who are charming above all women. What is more fervent than your ardour, more sure than your promises, more touching than your sighs, more tender than your love, more pleasant than your company, sweeter than your intercourse, and, in fine, more charming than your beauty? With so many perfections and attractions, how can you have the least doubt that I could ever leave you? Do not think it so light a matter, for my heart is full of your charms, and I respect you as much as I adore you. I give myself wholly to you—my body, my soul, my possessions, my honour: I sacrifice all for the love of you. But even thus I am not sure of you. You cause me many sorrows; but when I remember all our exquisite transports, all our sweet violence, I forget my grief. What ardour, what fire, what love have we not tasted together! Shall we ever enjoy those precious moments again?

"To answer you about the journey you are making.¹ I think you show too much eagerness to go, but since you wish it so ardently of course I approve. You had the same wish to go to Frankfort! If I were to tell you my true thoughts, I do not care too much for my lovely one to seek places of amusement at such an unhappy time;

¹ The visit to Berlin; this was deferred for a time (Colt's *Despatch*).

but what must be must be—and, indeed, how can we prevent it? To comfort myself I whispered to my heart it was the very place for me to see you without being known; but it answered, ‘You will have only a moment, and the rest of her day must needs be given to others.’

“I don’t mind the Electress of Brandenburg’s talk, and the way you say you conducted yourself at her Court charmed me, though I cannot quite believe it. But you do not tell me the names of the people where you have been, and it is very vexing that you have not had my letters. The Prince will not join the others, but go to the Elector of Brandenburg’s. You are wise perhaps to put yourself right in that quarter, but to what end will it lead you? You have not enough strength of mind to alter your conduct. What do you mean to do? When we are the best friends in the world, the least rumour frightens you and makes you wish I were ten thousand leagues away; but then, when you reflect, you are sorry for your fears. This continual vacillation does not help us. Look at the Electress of Brandenburg. She lets the world talk till it is tired—till it no longer talks about her. Yet she has the same to fear as you. As long as they know nothing *positively*, all will work for the best if you are courageous; but the least thing frightens you. How then can I give you any advice? You do me an injustice when you say that I am ‘engaging in new conquests.’ I swear to you on my oath that so far from having any such intention, I have never been to visit any woman except the wife of my lieutenant-colonel, whom I cannot avoid calling on sometimes. I did, however, accept the supper invitation of the Elector and the Count of Nassau, and many light ladies were present, of whom I have told you.

“The tale about my house can only have originated with Countess Platen, and she may one day have to pay

very dearly for her lies. I could revenge myself on her very well through Aurora's lover, but I fear that might do harm, and I should not like to go to that extremity before I am forced to do so."

"TWO HOURS FROM DIST, *October 31.*

"Here I am arrived at my garrison—the most barren spot in the world! I am lodged with the nuns; they are not like those of Venice, for they see only their nearest relations. I have not got my leave yet, but that does not worry me much; I shall be consoled if I get it soon. I should have gone about it without fail to-day, only I have hurt my foot and may have to rest here a few days. Still, it makes me rage, for I hoped to have gone before the Prince's departure; now I cannot. See what bad luck I have! Were it not for a stout heart I should break down. Pardon me, I pray, for having advised you to forget me. I am too much your friend not to know I ought to do so; but it is no use. I *cannot* give you up. I do nothing but weep. My beard is like a hermit's; my nails are as long as if I were going to dig up my grandfather. . . . When my servant was combing my hair he found several, at least ten or twelve, grey hairs, which show how I take things to heart. Farewell."

"DIST, *October 27 / November 6.*

"I am in the most cursed hole in the world. I can get nothing I want, neither your letters nor leave from my regiment. I have to-day sent my equipage to Hanover, and am waiting for orders to start; the moment I get them I will post at once to the place where my love calls me. I am desperate at waiting so long for my leave, and will give up the service rather than remain here. If I am driven to that, what would you have me do? Don't

think you will dissuade me, for my mind is made up, and if I leave the service I shall at least be able to see you secretly. I remember asking you whether you wish me to wear a wig or not; as you haven't answered, I fear you have not got my letter. I am not expecting any more letters from you here, but I beg you to arrange so that I may find some at Hanover, at our good friend's. Will *ma petite louche* write a word or two about her journey, so that our friend may take precautions. I cannot live without you. . . . I have composed a song in German about my lovely one; I sang it at a party. I told the guests that the beautiful one was called Léon-nisse, and they swore that they would drink their toasts to that name. That made the happier, and I drank with them. To make the wine pleasanter, I found an old red ribbon, rather faded, which I dipped into it. You know from whom the ribbon comes. This is the only hour I have had a little happiness for three weeks. I must have some if I am to live. When we meet you will win me back to my merry mood. No fear will make me falter, no obstacles hinder me; dangers will not weaken me—on the contrary, they will increase my passion, and hindrances will make the sweetness all the greater. That is how one should love. Love me likewise, and I shall be as happy as a king."

All this time the Court of Hanover was in great excitement about the electorate. The desire of years was now at the point of realisation, and Duke Ernest Augustus was daily expecting a notification from the Emperor that he had been invested with the electoral bonnet. The powerful support of the Elector of Brandenburg was now on his side. On the other hand, his arch-enemy, Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel, was plotting with might and main

against him, and pages of Colt's entry book at this time are filled with tales of intrigue. The electorate was trembling in the balance. News from Vienna was alternately good and bad. The visit to Berlin was settled, then it was deferred, then it was decided upon again.¹ During this anxious period the Duke of Hanover and his eldest son went to Celle to take counsel with Duke George William, who was warmly supporting his brother.

Meanwhile Sophie Dorothea, who cared nothing for electorates, but whose soul was absorbed in her secret passion, was keeping up a constant correspondence with Königsmarck, and longing with eager impatience for his return. The Electress's visit, the return of the Prince, and other matters had rendered it impossible for her to see Königsmarck, even if he should come back; but the visit of her husband and father-in-law to Celle at last gave her the opportunity for which she yearned. She wrote to Königsmarck entreating him to come to her at once, with leave or without it. On receipt of her letter he set out immediately, riding night and day. The following letters were written by him on the eve of, and during, the journey:

“DIST, *October 31 / November 10.*

“Since you bid me lose no time in coming to you, I have determined to start at once, without waiting for leave, whatever may happen. It is not very prudent, for it will give them the pretext they seek; but since you wish to see me, I fly, I rush to the spot where you are. Why cannot I be there to-night? You relieve me of my forebodings by saying that with prudence and wisdom we shall be able to outwit our enemies. Let me know your plans, and I will give you my views. My life and hap-

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, November 1, 1692.

piness depend on them. I am sorry your letters were delayed, for I suck from them much sweetness. *Anima mia*, what can I do to prove my gratitude? How happy I am, mine angel, my divinity, my delight, my sole consolation! Your merits are beyond all else in the world, your charms above all the sex, your beauty equal to that of the goddesses. I cannot live without you any longer. I am dying to be near you; but there are yet many days. Adieu, my soul, my life. Adieu."

Pour la personne connue.

"SUNDAY, November 6/16.

"This is to give you warning that I shall arrive to-morrow evening. You understand me, do you not? Should this fall into your hands before ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Monday, let me have a line or two from you. On receiving your letter I will act accordingly; but should you receive mine *after* ten o'clock, I will await the usual signal. Farewell."

"[*En route, later.*]

"I hoped to have found post-horses here, but there are none. Therefore, instead of Monday, I shall not be with you until Tuesday, the 8th. Do not let the seal alarm you: I opened the letter. Though the hasty journey will have tired me to death, I cannot let the night pass without throwing myself at your feet. Do not refuse me my prayer, or I shall die. You will see me in a mean guise, but I hope you will not mind. I can come in secretly, without any one seeing me, and be hidden as long as you like. I only wait for a word in answer from La Confidente. I will come according to your usual signal. The answer can be sent to my secretary. He will know where I am; it will be given me without fail. Farewell. I am pining for the hour."

Thus, after a week's journey, hindered by many obstacles and delayed by the many subterfuges, Königs-marck entered Hanover by stealth in disguise, and the same night, all travel-stained and weary as he was, he found his way to the Princess's chamber. The lovers met again after a separation of six months. They were fully aware of the risk they ran. What tears and sighs and shadow of parting must have been mingled with the joys of that brief hour's reunion!

The next day Königs-marck doffed his disguise and reported himself to the Field-marshal. As he had left his regiment without leave he fully expected to be sent away to his estates at Hamburg—a proceeding which would be tantamount to his dismissal from the Hanoverian service. He had furnished the pretext his enemies were seeking: he had had his hour and was prepared to pay the price.

But the Duke was away at Celle, and Marshal Podevils was Königs-marck's very good friend, and was not disposed to press him too hardly on his breach of discipline. Instead of sending him to Hamburg he ordered him to remain at Hanover. The lovers' joy was unbounded and for a few days they seem to have enjoyed one of their brief spells of happiness, unalloyed by jealousy and fear. The story of this is told in Königs-marck's letters.

“[HANOVER], *Wednesday, November 9.*

“I was never more surprised or rejoiced in my life than at dinner, when Marshal Podevils ordered me not to go to Hamburg. I am still ignorant of his reasons, but I shall know to-morrow. I asked him to remember his orders in case they wished to refuse my request, that he might take my part. He reassured me on that account. I am the happiest man in the world. Fortune, who has

turned her back on me so often, shows her face again, and I draw a good omen. Heaven be praised if our sorrows should end in this way and we should be able in future to live as we wish! You may be sure I slept well last night, for, as you saw, want of sleep was depressing me unduly. But I think you made allowance for a man overwhelmed by love, grief, and a thousand other emotions.

"Last night makes me the happiest and most satisfied man in the world. Your embraces showed me your tenderness, and I could not doubt your love. They still talk much about the journey to Berlin, and flatter themselves that the business at Vienna will end as they wish.¹ *Je reste inviolablement à vous.*

If Königsmarck were to remain unmolested at Hanover, it was necessary that he should win again the good will of the Countess Platen and lull to rest her jealous suspicions. She was all powerful, and, acting on the advice of the Electress of Brandenburg, Sophie Dorothea sought to conciliate her, and again advised Königsmarck to do the same. He at first refused with real or simulated indignation, but eventually yielded, and made his peace with her. The lovers then enjoyed a period of comparative immunity. Every person about the Court was, in fact, too much occupied with business of high political importance to heed them and their affairs. Would the Duke of Hanover go to Berlin, or would he not? Would the Emperor invest him with the electorate, or would he not? These were the all-absorbing questions at Hanover. One was soon answered in the affirmative. On December 2 the Duke of Hanover set out for Berlin, accompanied by the Prince. Princess Sophie

¹ The visit to the Elector of Brandenburg at Berlin and the Electoral investiture at Vienna by the Emperor.

Dorothea was to have gone too, but at the eleventh hour, as she wished to remain with Königsmarck, she feigned illness. Her *ruse* was completely successful. The Court physician was called in, and the Princess was declared unfit to travel, kept at Hanover, and made to undergo a course of treatment. Königsmarck writes:

“[HANOVER, *November.*]

“On rising from my mattress, which I found the softest in the world, they gave me your letter, wherein I found, what I knew before, the most constant love in the world. Your many virtues set you above the goddesses, and your constancy raises you above your sex. I note that your answer to the one [Electress of Brandenburg] who proposed you should make it up with La Platen, was to the effect that if the Duke ordered it you would obey, though you did not see to what end. You ask me my feeling about the matter. I would never advise you to do such a thing, for it is beneath noble souls. But what grieves me is that while you think it a mean action on your part, you advise me to do it. I believe you wish to try me, and so I forgive you; otherwise I should be very angry with you for wishing me to do a despicable thing. Don't imagine I will consent. I will not budge an inch from my determination for all the countesses in the world; but I am willing to aid your plan, since you hope for a happy ending. I am willing to be civil to her, even friendly, as in former times, if she be civil to me; but never could I make her believe I liked her, hating her as I do. Fie! it is beneath me. My transports of delight when I held you in my arms prevented me from realising the full force of your proposition; I find it so much beneath me that I refuse altogether, and beg you will say no more about it. How can I thank you, angel mine, for

all your sweet favours? You have made me the happiest man in the world."

"November.

"You could not have given me pleasanter news. Though the journey will not take place,¹ I still owe you the same debt, but with this difference—if they shatter themselves with their politics, we shall not risk the same chance of being discovered. That may easily come to pass; indeed I hope to God they will break each other up. But, Madame, my joy is not without alloy, for Prince Ernest told me that the Prince assured him, if the journey to Berlin fell through, he would go to Aller. However, I would rather see you there than run the risk of being sent away from you, which would surely happen if we were discovered. My ill-luck follows me, and I see no hope of being luckier in the future. I could most certainly have come to you last night, but La Dondon² whispered to the Duchess's *valet-de-chambre*, and I thought they were whispering about us, so I made up my mind to deprive myself of the happiness of being with you. I am very grateful to you for promising to appear this evening. Do come, that I may see the divine eyes that give me light. If you suffered at the comedy, I suffered more. I was dying to look at you, for I found you more beautiful than ever; but I dared not give my eyes that delight for fear of spoiling everything.

"The journey to Hamburg depends on your commands, and I will take them from your lips this evening. At the same time I will tell you all about my interview with La Platen—to rejoice you. I will only tell you now that

¹ The journey to Berlin was postponed (*vide* Colt's *Despatch*, November 18).

² *La Dondon*, the plump woman, a lady-in-waiting.

tears were mingled with our conversation, but I found a way of changing them to loving looks. It was a gross insult to my love for you, for which I mean to see you at my feet begging my pardon. You cannot love me as much as I love you, for at your bidding I have sinned against my love for you."

"November 29 / December 9, 1692.

"I have heard nothing of your illness except that the Duchess told me you were very unwell, and the Prince said so too; in fact, every one thinks you are quite unequal to the journey. Mind you do not undeceive them! Everything goes well up to now; my throat is rather swollen, but that will not hinder me from seeing you, if you wish it, to-morrow evening. I am sorry you are so *triste*: why cannot I be with you to make you forget your pains? But, beloved, remember you are making the effort for a man who will be ever grateful to you, and who is convinced that he is loved by the sweetest woman in the world. To-night, between six and seven o'clock, I shall write to you again. Farewell."

"About November 30 / December 10, 1692.

"Poor child! what are you not suffering? To be rubbed¹ without being ill is too much! I am really unworthy of the pain you are undergoing, and am quite crushed by all you tell me of your sufferings. Can I do nothing to deserve all you do for me? I call to witness all my tenderness, my love, my overwhelming passion, my devotion, hoping thus to be worthy. I would sacrifice myself a thousand, thousand times, only too happy to

¹"Pauvre enfant! Que ne souffrez-vous point! Suer, se faire frotter, sans avoir de mal c'en est trop." Apparently a seventeenth-century form of massage.

seal with my blood the love I bear you, counting it an honour to lose my life for so sweet a woman. If my stupid verses can divert you and make you laugh, here they are. I will compose some every day:

Du sagst Du liebst mich,
Und ich anbet' Dich,
Da sind wir Beide vergnügt, etc.

"I have heard nothing new. The news from Vienna is good; they expect the courier every moment. The Prince is going; and every one pities you, poor dear! they are quite sure you are unable to go. Up till now everything goes on well. Tell me if you think it possible for us to meet to-morrow. They certainly spy upon us, but if we fear no surprises, *pour l'amour de Dieu* let me see you! I cannot live so many days without a glimpse of you. I would rather die than lose my love."

"December 1/11, 1692.

"I could learn nothing about your journey. La Rose¹ said he thought it would be very inadvisable for you to travel, for your illness might come from your being *enceinte*, and traveling would be hurtful to you—even dangerous. La Court said she did not believe the Prince would go; but one cannot be sure about that—the only sure thing is that you must stop where you are. I will tell you more to-morrow. Arrange for some one to wait for me in the gallery at half-past eleven. I will write to you all I know, and you may be sure that after the sweet privileges you have given me I could never change. On the contrary, I love you a thousand times more every day. Your charms fire me so much that I can hardly live. I have the sweetest dreams about you. Farewell until to-morrow."

¹ La Rose was the Court physician.

The Duke of Hanover's journey was wholly successful, and if gratified ambition can make a man happy he returned to Hanover a happy man. The labours and the intrigues of years were at last crowned with success, the dearest object of his life was granted—he came back Elector. The news was eagerly expected. Colt writes: "A courier is come hither with the welcome news that the electoral bonnet was given on the 9th, and just now we have had advice that the new Elector will be here this day."¹

The new Elector arrived as advised, and the whole city turned out to meet him. His entry was a triumphal procession. There were great Court ceremonials: all the foreign envoys went in state to pay their respects to the Elector; there was a general thanksgiving in the churches and much firing of cannon.

In the Court functions Sophie Dorothea—henceforth to rank as the Electoral Princess—was called upon to play her part. As she was naturally fond of gaiety, there is no doubt she rapidly recovered from her "illness," and entered with zest into the spirit of the festival. Equally certain is it that Königsmarck's jealousy was again aroused. He made little or no excuse for the exigencies of her position, and indeed would seem to have resented her access of rank as a personal affront; he was certainly jealous of her husband, if we may judge from the following remonstrance, which is perhaps better given in the French:

"December, 1692.

"Princesse Electorale! L'on peut à présent vous nommer comme cela, car apparemment le prince Electoral vous aura investie de ce titre d'honneur cette nuit passée.

¹ Colt's *Despatch*, December 20, 1692.

Les embrassades sont-elles plus charmantes quand on est dans ce rang! . . . Je ne peux dormir de rage, qu'un prince électoral me prive du plaisir de voir ma charmante maîtresse. Je vous aurai félicité aujourd'hui de votre nouvelle dignité, mais je doute que votre époux ait fait son devoir, aujourd'hui, car si, l'on doit juger de son empressement pour vous revoir, l'investiture ne sera faite qu'à six heures du matin. Je souhaite que celle-ci vous soit rendue immédiatement après vous aurez en fraîche mémoire les plaisirs électoraux. . . . Hélas! je n'oserais vous faire souvenir de ceux que nous avons eus ensemble; ils vous paraîtront si minces (je me sers du mot *mince*, parce qu'une chanson dit: 'Hélas, mon prince, que vos amours sont minces') que vous n'en aurez plus l'idée."

This letter brings the correspondence to a close for a time. Soon after, the Court festivities consequent on the Electorate came to a close, and Königsmarck left on a visit to his estates near Hamburg.

The year 1692 ended brilliantly for the House of Hanover.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRYST AT BROCKHAUSEN

O friend of all true lovers—tender Night!
O solace of the dark! O comforter!
Cover us in from the too garish light
With curtains that no curious breathings stir
Hem us about, and set thy stars to stand,
That none may come us nigh to hear or see
How mouth seeks trembling mouth and hand holds hand,
Or what low whisperings of wonder be.
Cover us in, and keep us well from harm;
Let us lie surely in thy shelter fair
(Even as my love lies safe within my arm,
Content to find her present Heaven there):
And we will tell thee all our secrets sweet
Ere Day binds sunny sandals on thy feet.

W. A. MACKENZIE, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.¹

THE future was casting dark shadows along the path of the Princess and her lover throughout the year 1693. Their meetings were brief and stolen; their partings anxious and prolonged—a foretaste of that long parting when they would meet no more. The letters which passed between the lovers during the first five months of this year apparently did not find their way into the hands of Aurora, and are therefore not preserved in this collection. It is, moreover, difficult to follow the movements of the Courts of Hanover and Celle during this period, for Colt, our invaluable guide, went to Dresden in January to invest the Elector of Saxony with the

¹ By permission.

Order of the Garter, and remained many months. The English envoy had also to meet the Saxon demands in return for the aid the Elector was to give William and the Allies in the forthcoming campaign. This occupied him until May, when he returned to Celle, and soon after, the campaign began simultaneously in Flanders and in the Palatinate. The Electoral Prince of Hanover went with the Hanoverian troops to Flanders, and the Elector of Saxony led his troops to the Palatinate.

Königsmarck went neither to Flanders nor the Rhine, but remained at Hanover, despite the fact that his position had become more and more precarious. Whispers of his intrigue with the Princess ran around the Court; he was out of favour with those in authority, the Elector treated him with marked coldness. Yet he could not tear himself away from the Princess, and would not quit the Hanoverian service, as it gave him the pretext for keeping near her. For Königsmarck to remain in the Hanoverian army meant ruin; he had no hope of promotion, and if the intrigue were discovered it would probably mean his imprisonment or death, certainly his banishment. His financial affairs were neglected, and this, added to his gambling and extravagant living, made him very short of ready money; while, to make matters worse, the King of Sweden, who (with Denmark) was now quarrelling with the Brunswick princes to a point which looked like open war, threatened to confiscate his lands unless he quitted the service of an unfriendly prince. The outlook could hardly have been gloomier, and Königsmarck gained little to compensate him for the risks he was running. Since the beginning of the year there had been an obvious, though unexpressed, determination on the part of those in authority to keep him and the Princess apart. In January he went to Ham-

burg. On his return to Hanover the Princess was sent to Celle, and she did not return until the preparations for the campaign were well advanced. It was expected that Königsmarck would serve in the campaign in Flanders as he had served the year before; but he excused himself on divers grounds—the hope of being near the Princess through the summer, while the Electoral Prince was away, was too tempting for him to resist. There may have been another reason, too, for last year he had contracted heavy gambling debts in Flanders which were not yet paid.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been difficult for Königsmarck to have had himself excused, but it so happened that there was a possibility of his services being required nearer home. The kings of Sweden and Denmark, always uncertain, had practically withdrawn from the Alliance, and were now threatening hostilities more particularly against Hanover and Celle. Their demands not being satisfied, the Danes gathered their troops around Ratzeburg, in Saxe-Lauenburg, a fortified town north-east of Hamburg, not far from the Holstein frontier. Only three years before, when the Duke of Celle inherited Saxe-Lauenburg, as he feared his warlike neighbours, he had repaired the fortifications of Ratzeburg at great expense. The Danes and the Swedes, seeking a pretext for war, now found a menace in these fortifications, and demanded their demolition. This demand the Emperor was disposed to grant; but the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover strongly resisted it, and it looked as though they would have to send troops to the aid of the fortress, and in that event (which at first seemed very unlikely) Königsmarck volunteered his services.

Whatever the lovers' hopes were of remaining near one

another throughout the summer, they were doomed to speedy disappointment. No sooner had the Electoral Prince set out for Flanders early in June than the Electoral Princess, much against her will, was hurried away from Hanover to Luisburg, and she remained there, under the eyes of the Elector and Electress, until she went to Brockhausen on a visit to her parents, who were almost as vigilant. But, despite all obstacles, the lovers found a way to meet, and one night, at Brockhausen, a country house of the Duke of Celle's, the Chevalier came to his Léonnisie. The outlines of the tryst are given; it needs but little imagination to fill in the picture. The warm June night . . . the air heavy with the scent of the limes . . . the cavalier hidden amid the trees . . . the signal, the soft low whistle . . . the Princess stealing through the dusk to meet her lover. . . . It is the tale of Tristan and Isolde over again.

The correspondence in this chapter opens on the day when the Princess was sent to Luisburg, and the letters are those which passed between the lovers through June while she was at Luisburg and Brockhausen. They are largely taken up with the possible gallantry of Prince Max, a lovers' quarrel because Königsmarck went to a supper party at the Countess Platen's, a reconciliation and subsequent meeting.

Save for the stolen visit to Brockhausen, Königsmarck was all the time at Hanover, holding himself in readiness to march against the Danes if need be. Perhaps the most noteworthy point in the letters is the conduct of the wily Electress¹ in praising Königsmarck to her daughter-in-law. Her only possible object could have been to sound poor Sophie Dorothea, who readily fell into the

¹The Duchess Sophia, henceforth known as the Electress, and Duke Ernest Augustus as the Elector.

trap, and no doubt betrayed herself much more than she admits.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“[LUISBURG], Thursday, June 8, 1693.

“I arrived here in great distress; I cannot tell you the anguish I suffered after we parted. The thought that I may not see you for three months robs me of happiness. I am continually reproaching myself for not having said more to you—for having lost those precious moments. But I thought the other coach was following me, and my grief was so great that I never dreamt of asking about it, and I was walking slowly, waiting for my ring.

“To crown my misery, I found they had put Max next to me, in the room belonging to my husband. I wanted so much to go to bed when I got here. I was quite broken down, and had such a headache I could scarcely hold up. Imagine my astonishment when I found everything in uproar and disorder, for my servants had not had the wit to prepare anything, although they knew my wishes, as well as I know yours. It was most careless and impertinent of them. I do not ever remember having been so angry. Every one was at supper when I arrived. I sent word to the major-domo to change my rooms quickly, as I absolutely refused to have those arranged. He raised very absurd difficulties, and excused himself by saying he had only obeyed the Elector's orders. At last I ordered Koptein to come. You would have laughed much had you seen me, for I was very angry, and rated him soundly. He went and spoke to the Elector, and came back presently to tell me that if the suite of apartments were three times as large it would be for me alone, and gave orders that Max should be lodged in the other house. I hear Max was mighty civil, and

would not let his people do anything without knowing whether I approved. If the Elector had not sent me a proper answer, I should have gone away to-day—reason would have said to Brockhausen, but my heart would have whispered to you, and I know not whether my heart would have prevailed over my reason. I should have spent the night, on my own authority, in the apartments opposite, which they say are reserved for my father, but it is rumoured are kept for La Platen. However, I am as I would be, away from all company; and the Electress's [plan] has fallen through also, so I have nothing more to fear. I saw no one yesterday except those I have mentioned, and I have seen no one to-day. I shall not go out. I prefer to be alone and give myself up to my tears, which are even more abundant to-day than yesterday. As long as I was able to see you I did not realise what our separation meant, but now I have no hope—no comfort in the world. *Grand Dieu!* why am I fated to be separated from [such a lover as you? How sensible I am of your love and tenderness!—they are graven on my heart and memory for ever. . . . I longed to write to you last night, but I could not, as I had neither paper nor ink. I was very much vexed, for it would have relieved me to have sat down and poured out to you the immensity of my pain and my passion. *Adieu, mon enfant adorable.* I must end, not through my heart's fault—it is so full that I should never end—but because my eyes hurt me so much."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, June 8.

"My grief is greater now than when we parted. Your tender caresses kept me from realising all our separation meant at the moment; but now, alas! I am the most

miserable man alive. I love, I am loved; my mistress is loving, constant, and true: yet I cannot hope for happy days. Oh! cruel Love, for whom dost thou keep thy sweetness?—for the inconstant and those who love not truly? It seems so, for were love's sweetness for the constant, we should surely taste more of it. If my sorrow is so overwhelming now, when I am only five leagues from you, what will it be when the fatal day dawns for my departure? Every thousand paces will plant a dagger in my heart, and before I join the army my sobs will have stifled me. But I will gladly suffer torments, and chance all the odds of changeable Fate, if I can only see you again as before, lovable, passionate, constant, charming, gracious, and true. Give me but the hope of our meeting, and I can endure all the cruel woes a cruel absence can cause. I curse the day it entered my mind to ask permission to go to the war. *Dieu!* can I truly love you when I take so false a step? Hate me, see me no more in your life, forbid the very mention of my name, keep my letters no more, treat me like a dog, like the meanest of men,—I deserve it all! But what advice am I giving you? *Grand Dieu!* I shudder when I reflect. Were you to take me at my word, what would become of me? Be generous, forgive my fault, have pity on me, for I am losing my head and know not what I say.

"I send herein the numbers,¹ which are rather meagre; but never mind—the rest will follow. I cannot conceal from you a misfortune which befell me last night. La Platen, to damn me, sent to beg me to come to supper in the castle behind the mill. I pretended to be ill, but as she insisted and sent a second time, I went, for fear she might guess the cause of my sadness. What bondage!"

¹ This refers to the second cypher—in numbers.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“[LUISBURG], Friday, June 9/19,
One o'clock after midnight.

“I did not expect to get any news from you so soon, so picture my joy when I received a thick packet. Alas! my joy did not last long, for if the beginning of your letter is delightful, the end of it is much the reverse. I should have written to you even if I had not received it, for my only pleasure is to make you remember me, and I could not go to bed without assuring you of my love and faithfulness. I am heartbroken at not being able to see you, and until we meet again I shall find no relief from my sorrows. But I don't know why I tell you all this: you do not feel the same towards me, as your conduct shows only too well. I am not at all pleased with you for going to La Platen's supper party; it pierces me to the heart. You have certainly a command over your feelings which I cannot hope to imitate. It would not have been possible for me to have shown my face at a party the very day we bade farewell, but I am sure you concealed your emotions so well that no one suspected you of sorrow. I do not wish to reproach you, but if it be true that you love me, you should be sorry for showing it so little. Surely I deserve better of you, for the way I live and the sorrow I suffer might let you deprive yourself of a little amusement. I can hide my grief so little that Sitardie to-day asked me the cause of my sadness, and then he went on to say he was going to compose a lament on your absence! I came late from my room, and went only a moment to see the company playing cards. The Elector wants me to take a hand at Neike (?), so that he may play with me; Ilten to be a third. I shall keep out of his way, for I have not the same command over my feelings as you. I drove out with the Electress. We

were quite alone, and she spoke of you and said you were *très gentil*. Balati¹ offered me his hand when I came down to supper. I should have refused him had I dared, for it suffices that he is no friend of yours for me to hate him. After supper I kept close to the Electress; she went to the table, and the game ended a moment after. I retired as soon as I could, and walked with La Confidente under the trees near the palace. See the difference between my conduct and yours, and think how much my love is above yours. I shun everybody, I am careful over the smallest trifle; yet, no sooner am I gone than you forget your vows and console yourself with a woman who hates me. No! Nothing can excuse your conduct, nothing can be more unkind. You had no end of pretexts for declining that supper party, yet you went. I tremble for the future. What will it be, *Grand Dieu!* in a few months, if you can do such a thing on the very day I leave? You are so easily comforted. I cannot write more—for my tears."

•

" *L'envoi, the next morning.*

"I have not slept a wink; my eyes are as big as fists, and I dare not show myself in public. La *pauvre* Confidente is pale because I fret so; she sleeps in the small room next me, and I woke her up at five o'clock in the morning. I am still in bed in agonies of despair at your conduct; it shows so little love for me. I cannot be comforted, for it was the last thing I expected—a thunderbolt would not have astounded me more. Was not your absence enough to bear? Why do you crush me with such cruelty? I should like La Rose's opinion to come true, but I don't expect it. Adieu, Monsieur. I

¹The French envoy.

wish you many pleasures; no doubt you will find fresh ones every day, and forget all about me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, June 10/20.

"Once on a time I was wont to complain that I did not dream of you; but now, thank Heaven, not a night goes by but I dream of you only. A poet has composed these lines on my dream delights:

L'autre jour j'aperçus en songe
Celle qui cause mes soupirs,
Qui consentait à mes désirs;
Mais tout cela n'est qu'un mensonge.
Ah! ce mensonge m'a flatté
Autant qu'a fait la vérité.

La beauté qui le jour se couvre,
Pendant la nuit ne cache rien:
Les yeux fermés je vis un bien
Qui disparaît quand on les ouvre.
Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours!

Rien ne fut plus doux que Silvie,
Et, sans que je fisse d'efforts,
J'eus dans l'image de l'amour,
Le plus doux plaisir de la vie.
Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours!

I wish you the same delight, the sweetest the absent can know. If my song win your approval, and I find any one who can fit music to the words, I will send it to you. I sing it with the greatest pleasure.

"What do I not owe to you? You behaved so well about Prince Max. You see, you have more power than you think. As long as your father lives they will always treat you with consideration: the Elector has need of him, and will not readily fall out with him. You wish to

know, *ma chérie*, how I pass my time. Alas! how can I spend it away from you but in dreaming day and night of your lovely eyes? I pine, I sigh, I curse the day of my birth. Sleeping, I dream of thee; waking, I sing:

Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours!

“La Platen sends me pressing invitations every day, but I only went once—I told you, the day before yesterday, at nine o’clock. I found them all at table. Without joining the party, I walked up and down by myself, singing, and as soon as they rose I returned to town without saying a word. If this does not please you, order me as you will; I am ready to obey all your commands. If you think we can meet while you are at the Elector’s, let me know, for I am dying with impatience to see you; but, for the sake of our love, do not risk anything,—we should pay for the joy too dearly, our bliss would be turned to bane. How grateful I am to you for telling me your love in terms so tender! Believe me, mine equals yours. I cannot find words strong enough to express it. My eyes bear witness of my heart’s passion; they have spoken for my loving heart in torrents of tears. When a man loves as I love, he does not change; and you are one of those rare women whom a man respects, honours, and adores all the more when he knows them well. My love is rather worship. If any comparison can be made between mortals and the gods, you could well be taken as an example. What beauty, what goodness, what sweetness, what charity, what brightness, what charm, what loveliness, what clemency! You are mercy incarnate. You are like the divine beings of whom the Bible speaks. Do not be astonished at my

quoting you sweet things from the Bible, for I am in a most devout mood.

"Tell me when you are going to Brockhausen and what answer your mother has sent you: I must know. I should like to know also how the Elector behaves to you and what the Electress has said. I rejoice that Prince Max's charming manners do not charm you. But beware of him, I pray you; you know what he attempted before, and you know what a fool he is. One should not have any intimacy with fools,—they talk too much."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG], Sunday, June 10/20.

"I am starting in two hours' time with the Electress for Brockhausen; we shall be back to-morrow evening. She is taking no one but Bruno and a lady's maid, and I am taking only Marie. I received your letter, and it gave me great pleasure. I should have nothing to complain about if you had not accepted La Platen's supper party on the very day I left: it is like a dagger's stab to me; but I have written you a long letter already on the subject, so I will say no more. If you can justify yourself and give some good reason for having gone, you will relieve me greatly. . . . I have had a letter from my husband; he permits me to go to Brockhausen, but does not wish me to be there long. I told him that the Electress had given you a knot of ribbon for your standard, and other ladies had done the same. Here are his very words in answer: 'You must have a great lack of news to write to me about *la galanterie de madame ma mère*; I doubt not that you followed her example.' There is something in his answer that grates on me.

"Your song is very pretty. Send me the music. Alas! I have not had a pleasant dream yet: how can I

when I sleep so little? Sitardie told me again yesterday that he is composing some verses on your absence in which he depicts me as wasting with sorrow. I don't quite like the joke, yet I dare not take it seriously. I did not leave my room until very late. The Elector has been asking me why I will not play. I excused myself on the ground that Ilten could not be seated so long; he was so much interested with Sitardie that he was always wanting to run about after him. I fear he did not believe me; but I look on it as a positive torture to be so long with people. I went for a drive with the Electress. She did not go to the supper-table, so I supped alone in my room and went for a walk after with La Confidente; then I went to bed. I have no joy but in solitude. It would be a great joy to me to see you once more; not a moment goes by that I do not wish it. La Confidente is in the small room next me, and you could stay without being seen; there would be nothing to fear. You could even stop a whole day without any one guessing it; but as it is almost impossible for you not to be met coming or going by some one who would recognise you, I will say nothing about it, for though I long passionately to see you, I would rather deprive myself of the joy than expose you to danger. . . . My mother has not yet answered my letter. When I know her plans I will let you know; but in any case I shall come back here with the Electress for a few days. I was nearly forgetting to thank you for the sweet things you say, and when I am quite pleased with you I will send some to you; but I shall not look for them in the Bible (as you do), but in my heart. You ask how the Elector behaves to me. He is the same as usual, I believe; but to tell you the truth I haven't troubled to find out. The Electress is very friendly."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], June 11/21.

“Your letter of the 9th would have given me great comfort had not your most unjust reproaches wrung my heart. I only went to the supper to prevent people talking, but you think it a crime. How unfortunate I am to have done a thing which displeases you, through motives of policy! You know I am compelled to keep a watch over myself before others, and to go about as usual, therefore you are wrong in finding fault. . . . I love to see you a little jealous, but am thoroughly distressed when you think I have consoled myself in your absence with such as La Platen. Assuredly you are going out of your way to wound me. Why take such a contrary view of my conduct? What I did was only for love of you, but you will not take policy as an excuse. Maybe I have done foolishly; but think what you did a year ago in going to Monsieur Colt’s ball—a great *fête* as it was. You danced much and merrily, and in truth I was hurt, but policy excused it, and, after reading this I hope you will not think me so guilty, for what comparison is there between my walking near the river while others dance, and your dancing with many men? What I say is true, 107¹ will bear witness. I swear that I walked with him while they were dancing, and did not go near the lively company; but, on the contrary, without talking to anybody, I walked on the ramparts behind the cavalry barracks. After refusing La Platen’s invitation three times, I could not very well excuse myself for that night, for La Rose had taken me apart, saying; ‘Why are you so melancholy? Are you ill?’ I went, therefore, and paid my respects to La Platen. They were at the supper table. After supper they went out walking, but I sat

¹ The key to this cipher is lost.

down on a heap of fresh mown grass without saying a word to any one. I thought only of your charms and the joy of being loved by you, and then I took my way home without seeing La Platen any more. This I vow on my damnation, and I swear to you also that I will never put foot in her house again except to take leave, be the consequences what they may; so you can be at rest about that. I will never see her again, though it ruin me. All your entreaties will avail nothing.

"Now let us look into your conduct a little—you, so tender and true—and see if we can find a flaw in you. Prince Max went to your apartments, which could not be helped, and Balati escorted you downstairs. I heard this last piece of news through my enemies. You know well I am jealous of him. What, too, of the long conversations with Sitardie, which took place 'only because he spoke of me'? However, I am satisfied, if you would be the same. But you are so suspicious—and why? Because I went to a supper without eating, and to a dance without dancing. That is all my guilt. Do you think I would forsake my divinity for a supper? Really, if you have such a bad opinion of me, you had better leave me. But I tell you, without losing my temper, I love you passionately and without guile, and no interest, no beauty, no supper, and no dance will ever make me do anything which would give you just cause to suspect me. I entreat you tell me frankly if you are cured of your suspicions."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG, undated.]

"I returned with the Electress very late last night from Brockhausen, and had the joy of finding your letter, which I read over at least ten times. I should have

answered it before going to bed if it had been possible. But first let me tell you what happened at Brockhausen. We arrived there Sunday at nine o'clock in the evening; we supped, and after the company had retired I sat up with my parents until nearly two o'clock. They entered into my grievances very fully; they are not pleased with the way the Court of Hanover is acting, and they think exactly as I would have them do. My husband, it appears, wrote a very civil letter to my father, leaving him absolutely free to keep me as long as he pleases. You know he wrote to me quite the contrary, and I told them so. They want me to ask him how long he will let me stay away. Let me know if you approve of this. I will await your answer until Monday. I spent half the next day in bed, the other half with the Electress and my parents.

"They say the Danes are certainly marching. I know not whether to rejoice or be sad, in any case I fear I shall not have the joy of seeing you, for they seem determined to keep me here [Luisburg] as long as they can. Max is staying here. I have not said a single word to him: in fact, I should forget how to speak if it were not for the Electress and La Confidente; they are the only two with whom I have any conversation. We left Brockhausen at seven o'clock, and arrived here at eleven, and I had supper in my room. I took a bath this morning as an excuse for not going out. This is an exact account of everything I did yesterday and to-day.

"I must now answer your letter. I am sorry if mine grieved you, but my heart was so full that if I had told you all my anger you would not have got off as lightly as you did. I am satisfied with your excuses, and glad of your assurance that everything took place in public. Yet even so, I would have given my heart's blood for you

not to have gone. Without offence, how can you be such a fool as to draw a comparison between my going to Monsieur Colt's ball, whither I went a fortnight after you left,¹ and because the Elector and Electress insisted upon it, and your going to La Platen's supper party two hours after I had gone, and when you had bidden me so tender a farewell? I never even dreamt that you were disporting yourself in that way. But we will talk no more about it, for I love you, and I cannot be angry for long. Even before you wrote I had forgiven you. I am a fool to confess it; but do not take advantage of my weakness. Don't give me ground for thinking you are acting a part again; but, on the other hand, don't be so silly as to keep away from La Platen altogether. You know my views on the subject, and it is most important to keep her in good humour; therefore, for the sake of our love, go there as before. It was not your visiting her that I found so bad, but the time and the way you did it—on the very day I left. It nearly drove me out of my mind.

"You seem to mock at the account I have sent you of my doings. Mock as much as you please, but it is true. You tell me I talked a good deal with Sitardie. He told me he was composing some verses on your absence; but you can disabuse your mind of the idea that any one is flirting with me. I shall start at the end of the week for Brockhausen."

"[LUISBURG], *Wednesday, June 14/24.*

"The Electress talks about you every time I walk out with her; and, as I have told you, I am alone with her a good deal. I know not whether she does it through friendship for you or because she thinks it pleases me; in either case, it is the same. *Je ne peux même entendre*

¹ For the campaign in Flanders, June, 1692.

nommer votre nom sans un transport dont je ne suis pas la maîtresse. She praises you so highly that were she younger I should be jealous. I really think she is fond of you; she can hardly show it more, and it makes me quite uncomfortable! She has just sent me word to come out for a walk with her, and so robs me of the joy of writing to you—my only one when we are not together. Some day perhaps I shall be able to see you as I will, and never to leave you more. I believe I shall go mad, for the life I lead is intolerable. Let us hope for a happy change; let us do everything to be together. I shall never get used to separation from you; I find it harder every day, for I love you more ardently than ever."

"[LUISBURG], *Twelve midnight, [Saturday]*.

"I could not finish this afternoon. The Electress prevented me from bathing to-day. She tells me I have so very few days to remain here that she wishes me to be with her. However, I shall take a bath to-morrow. . . . I have never felt the force of my love for you more than now—except perhaps in our most rapturous moments. I tell you again, my life and my peace are in your hands. *Mon Dieu!* how dear you are to me! how dearly I love you! I shall never be happy until we are together all our life long. When will that bliss come? How I long and yearn for it! Such joy as that cannot be bought too dearly. . . . They tell me La Platen is not coming here after all; I am not surprised to hear it. I should have been astonished if she had come as long as *you* remain in Hanover. She is quite free now, and, should you take advantage, the opportunity is excellent. I am absent, and *les absens sont toujours tort*. But no! you would be incapable of anything of the kind. You are loving, tender, and true; it is a crime to suspect you."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], June 13/23.

“I am waiting to show you how absence has wasted me. I must know the hour, the day, and where I am to come. I will see to the rest. But tell me, how will you be able to keep me hidden without endangering yourself? The risk I run is not very great, and to see the one who loves me I would willingly be torn in pieces.

“Let me kiss the beautiful lips that kissed me so sweetly. Ah! when we meet we will show the sweet violence of our passion by the tenderest tokens. I would give my blood this very moment for one sip of your honey lips. I know battles are dangerous for us men, particularly against the Danes, for we always lose; but if you really wish to dispute the fact that I have more passion, more constancy, more devotion than you, I accept your challenge. Know this: for two months I have been preparing myself to meet the attack, and as it is long since I have taken up arms, I might be overcome. Yet I will fight a duel with you with the greatest possible joy. I only wish to know the *rendezvous*, the arms, and the seconds. My weapons will be my eyes and my mouth. . . . Choose a day and hour when duty will not hinder me from coming, and you will see how I shall fly to you. Come out when it suits you. I am glad you give me the chance.

“I am delighted to hear that La Confidente has put aside her chilly airs, and am curious to know with whom she has been flirting. She will say, ‘But, alas! it is a dream. Why is it not for good?’ I hope it is Bal aux Fores, though, in faith, she deserves some one more attractive, more gallant, and younger, for I verily believe she would show much passion for her lover, who would soon make her lose her coldness, for she is passing fair and has a good figure.”

“[HANOVER], *June 15/25.*

“It is very bad the Prince should write in two ways—bad for himself, but all the better for you and me; for they will clearly see what a rage he is in. You must have irritated him extremely. I have heard from Marshal Podevils. According to appearances war will be declared very soon, and as a great favour (which enrages me) they will let me take part in the campaign. I must take it ‘as a great favour,’ that some one evidently wishes to get rid of me! My regiment will march to the Elbe, and I shall be able to do the campaign, and to smooth matters down a little. The Marshal tells me I may return when they give me an order to do so. I am not to start this week, for he wishes first to learn the issue of a conference which is being held where you are [at Luisburg].¹

“It is not a little matter that your father is beginning to listen; and, with your mother’s help, you may perhaps succeed in your plan, provided you do not relax your efforts. Remember, it is the only way for us to become happy. . . . I should not advise you to write to the Prince to ask him the time you ought to stay, for in doing so you subject yourself, and it is always better to be free. Wait first to learn my fate, and when we know for certain what will be done with me, you can go to Brockhausen. If your parents again press you to write, say you know it will displease the Prince and you positively refuse to displease him while you have so little support to expect from your father. But should they promise anything substantial, write anything and everything they wish, but beware of being tricked. That is my little piece of advice. And now for yours. Don’t think of

¹ But meantime the Princess had gone again to her parents at Brockhausen.

inducing me to return to La Platen. All your commands and prayers will be in vain. Had I followed my own inclination, I should have kept to that resolution long ago; but you made me feign and act in a cowardly manner, which, but for you, I should never have done. But you will not catch me that way any more. Whatever may happen, I will avoid Monplaisir like hell. I have seen no lady in this house since you went away. I bathe in the river every evening at seven o'clock, and to kill time I shoot swallows from my window. I hope these innocent diversions will not give you further ground for unjust suspicions."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[BROCKHAUSEN], *Friday, June 16/26.*

"After pining for three days and suffering tortures of suspense, I have the joy of receiving two letters from you. The desire of my heart is to see you again. I have already told you it is quite easy as far as I am concerned. La Confidente sleeps in a small room near me. You can come in by a back door and stay twenty-four hours if you wish without the least risk to me. Every evening I walk alone with La Confidente under the trees, quite near the house. I will look out for you from ten o'clock until two o'clock. You know the usual signal. You must also know the back door, the door of the palisade is always open. Do not forget to give the [first] signal; it is you who must give it, and I will wait for you under the trees. I look forward with rapture to seeing you; I have longed for it every moment since we parted, and on that account have put off going away [from here]. My mother and father are in a great hurry to return [to Celle] as soon as possible. We can talk over our business when we meet; it would take too long to write about it.

I think only of the joy of seeing you. If joy kill, it will kill me. You will find me as tender as ever—even more so. I shall give you so many kisses, and with such fondness, that you will be sorry you ever doubted me. . . . I am sorry that you are no longer to go to Countess Platen's, it is rather important you should go. As for the other minx, she does not trouble me. I entreat you go there as usual, and so relieve my fears. I am quite easy now, for I believe you will always be mine. Come soon—soon; never mind the day; the sooner the better.”

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[BROCKHAUSEN (?)], *June 16/26.*

“I make haste to let you know I am here, and I flatter myself you will be as glad as I am. Le Feltam gave me my leave. I have changed my mood. At present let us think only of embracing each other. What joy for me, a hopeless lover! I had not shaved since our sad adieu, but to-day I am clean-shaven and merry-looking. Let every one sing ‘The chevalier is conqueror,’ and for my sake, for yours, and all that is dear to us, let me throw myself at your feet. See how joyful I am! Until now you have known me sorrowful, but I am beginning to breathe again and forget my troubles. Don’t think, though La Platen may be ‘free,’ she could in any way alter my devotion to you; death itself would not efface it, still less that old coquette. I don’t know what I have done to deserve the Electress’s favour, but if it does us any good I am very glad to have it.”

“*June 17/27.*

“ . . . I will not fail unless the command to march prevents me. I am dying with joy and longing. To-morrow night at ten o’clock I will be at the *rendezvous*. Le

signal ordinaire nous fera connaître. Je sifflerai du loin 'Les Folies d'Espagne.' If I understand the spot aright, it is near the house, between where the Duke's stables used to be and the house. I will be there at ten o'clock."

"[HANOVER], June 20/30.

"This is to let you know my expedition ended without accident, except that in coming out of the palisade I saw two men walking about six paces from me. I did not dare turn my head, and so was quite unable to see their faces. One of your women lighted a candle outside the dressing-room as I went through, but I do not know which one it was, for I did not dare turn my head. These are all the incidents, dear heart, except that I found the way much longer returning than coming. The difference is easily understood! I found when I got back a despatch to the effect that I must march with my regiment at the end of the month, and a letter from my secretary which makes me tremble. I will send you the original at the first opportunity. A million thanks for your sweet tenderness and dear proofs of love! Were it not for the comfort and consolation they give me, I should die of trouble, for no man before ever saw himself ruined all at once. But I have found a treasure worth all that Northern land, and I would not change places with that barbarous and unjust King [of Sweden]."

"[HANOVER], June 23/July 3.

"I shuddered on reading your letter.¹ To what danger I have exposed you! *Dieu!* how near we have been to our ruin! What a fatal accident to occur just at the wrong time! It is so like a novel that were you to tell it,

¹This letter of the Princess is missing; it must have referred to some accident after their meeting.

many people would not believe you. I had no idea so many people were about, and two of them followed me. I thought it was without design, but I see now that I owe it to my legs that they did not catch me. But I lost myself, and did not get back to my horse until four o'clock. Just think of the time I took in running from left to right and right to left! The favour which Providence has showed us is indeed great; I shall remember it for a long time. Just think how easy it is to be lost. All human prudence cannot avoid an accident, but we have come through safely. I vow that no one recognised me.

"You were sweet to say you were pleased with me, and I am so charmed with your assurances that I cannot thank you enough. I have slept well the last few nights; and I needed it, for the run on foot was very tiring. Your divine kisses intoxicated me so much that I drank a bumper to steady myself. They say the Elector will certainly be here on Monday. See how unfortunate we are. What ill-luck this is! I fret all the more because you are not coming with him. I am going away this day week. They say your father is going to Celle; if so, I hope greatly I may see you again. Think if it can be managed. *Ma petite brunette*, how I will kiss thee when I hold thee again! Meanwhile I dream of thee.

Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours!"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[BROCKHAUSEN], June 23 / July 3.

"I am very anxious. I have not heard from you yet.¹ I have had a letter from my husband in answer to the one I wrote from Luisburg complaining that they tried

¹The letters must have crossed.

to lodge Max next me. I also mentioned that you were going to the Urkin (?). He answers as follows: 'You have acted like a veritable Lucretia towards Max. I see that my honour is safe in your hands. I am surprised to hear Königsmarck is going to take part in the campaign to the Urkin (?); it will do him no good. I fear he has not paid his debts yet, and from all they say he will get into trouble in consequence.' I am in sore distress about this. Tell me what you wish me to answer him, for I am sure my husband takes a malignant delight in writing thus, he is full of envy and hatred against any one like you, who is charming and deserving, and merits distinction. I am engrossed with my own plans. My mother is beginning a business which will be very good for me if she succeeds. She wants to make over her Celle estates as a present, with money, to me. She spoke about the business to Bernstorff, who promised great friendship, and offered his services on my behalf. If they would only employ him I am sure he would see I had my rights. If he would take up my interests my father would do everything that could be wished. We must try every means in our power. The matter is too near my heart for me to neglect it, for upon the issue hangs all my future happiness."

“[BROCKHAUSEN], *June 25 / July 5.*

“We start to-morrow after dinner for Celle. I am very glad, for it brings us nearer to one another, and I shall hope to have news of you oftener. I have not been able to write from here as much as I should have liked. I am broken with many anxieties, and tremble lest your embarrassments may take you to Flanders. Your Swedish business worries me also, and to crown my misery I can-

not see you, and shall have to spend a whole month without you—you, who are the only joy of my life. *Grand Dieu!* how weary I am of the existence I lead! how sad and hopeless it all is! The end of my misery seems still very far off. But I am wrong to complain, since you love me: that thought should console me for everything, for as long as you do not change I shall be happy. . . . I hear my mother. Adieu."

CHAPTER XX

LOVE'S BITTERNESS

O love, O thou that, for thy fealty
Only in torment dost thy power employ,
Give me, for God's sake, something of thy joy,
That I may learn what good there is in thee.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

THE Princess spent the month of July at Celle and Wienhausen with her parents. She did not once meet her lover, who remained at Hanover daily expecting orders to start on the campaign against the Danes. For, contrary to expectation, and despite the mediation of an Imperial envoy, who journeyed to Hanover on purpose to arrange matters, the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover came to an open rupture with Denmark and Sweden over the fortifications of Ratzeburg, and Denmark sent troops to demolish them. This, of course, was tantamount to a declaration of war. It was an anxious time for the little Court of Celle, for the Danes were far superior in numbers, and if successful at Ratzeburg they might follow up their advantage by entering the Duchy and even seizing Celle itself.

It was especially unfortunate for the Princess, who, absorbed in her mad passion and desperately unhappy, had come to the conclusion that she could no longer live at the Court of Hanover, or indeed anywhere apart from her lover. She therefore concentrated her energies on obtaining a grant of money from her father, a sum sufficient for her to maintain an establishment of her own. The plea for independence was reasonable

enough, for she had been very unfairly treated in her marriage settlement; and at any other time the Duke, ignorant of the real reason for which she wanted the money, might have been disposed to listen, but now, with the expense of raising many troops and the possibility of defeat and ruin, he was quite unable to accede to her wishes. Without money things must e'en go on as before, for separate establishments were expensive and flight was even more so and Königsmarck, wealthy though he was, had none at this juncture. He was crippled with gambling debts, he had neglected his affairs, and the King of Sweden threatened to confiscate his estates. The lovers were in despair; everything fought against them; all around was war and rumour of war; while, to add to it all, Königsmarck was now to be sent away on a campaign against the Danes. Yet, as usual, their letters are filled alternately with ardent love and fierce jealousy; their love was not of a nature to give either of them any rest, even if things had gone smoothly. The proximity of Prince Max, despite the fact that he was the Princess's brother-in-law, was sufficient to arouse Königsmarck's suspicions (a curious comment on the morals of the time), and she, in her turn, was furiously jealous because he gave a farewell party to which the Countess Platen was invited. But the story of all this is told in the letters, which begin with the Princess's arrival at Celle and close with her return to Hanover. The Princess sent Königsmarck a few lines to tell him that she had reached Celle (and a little poem unfortunately lost), to which he replied.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“HANOVER, June 26 / July 6.

“After many days I received a letter from you. It

gave me as much joy in reading it as a starving man would have in devouring a delicate morsel when he had not tasted food for days. It satisfied my craving a little, but I still hunger until I kiss you again. I don't understand in what your father is hard, unless it be in the matter of your separate establishment. If that be so, I am surprised you should have broached the subject so soon, when you had only been home one night. I hope you will succeed, for your mother is on your side, and if your love be true you will work for it. . . . If you really wrote that song you ought to write some more, for it is very well done, and most kind to 'Tercis'; he thanks you very much, and when certain fancies are out of his head, he will try to answer it. Though your mother has promised you two thousand crowns, I fear it will be very little good, but it is well to have her on your side—would to Heaven your father were the same! I hope I shall not offend if I implore you, in case your mother warns you against me, not to let her make the least impression on your mind. The officious attentions of Prince Max and of those of whom you do not write, as well as the conversation you had with him, displease me very much. You asked me if you might speak to him, and you did so without my consent. Why did you not tell me? . . .

"I am a little reassured, for Prince Max has just arrived. Tell me all about the foreigners who have been at Celle. Marshal Podevils asked me yesterday to come and see him to-day, as he had something to say. I went about eleven o'clock. He said that having been always one of my friends, he wished to warn me some one had spoken to him about us, saying: 'What a row there will be if there should really be an intrigue between them!' I answered: 'Monsieur, since the day you warned me of the Elector's suspicions I have not spoken to Madame la

Princesse tête-à-tête'; and I promised him to be very discreet. He said he told the person who mentioned the matter that he would answer for me, and it was better not to speak about such things. He would not give the person's name, but I think it is a friend of yours and mine, 110.¹ The Marshal firmly believes this gossip originates with La Platen. He is on your side and pities you much, and it is kind of him to have warned me. He declared that the Elector was no longer suspicious, which is a comfort.

"The companies of infantry are marching, but my regiment remains near Hanover for a few days. Whether the Danes advance or not, I shall still have to go with the army. I must start without seeing you unless you can arrange it otherwise. It depends on your mercy and tenderness to say whether I shall be able to kiss your feet, and if my kisses are dear and sweet to you, you will say 'Yes.' Do not risk anything, for precautions must be taken. We are treading on dangerous ground; but when people love as we love they do not consider trifles, and if one holds the loved one, what matters the cost? Were I to see the scaffold before my eyes I would not swerve."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], Wednesday, July 8.

"If my letters give you pleasure, yours are the only joy of my life. But I have had one to-day which both rejoices and grieves me. I am *desolée* to see you are not satisfied with me. If I did not mention I had spoken to Max it was because I had not then done so. I had no conversation with him until the day he left, and this is word for word what passed between us. I said: 'Max, I

¹ 110, probably some courtier at Hanover, but the key is missing. (?) Sitardie.

thank you for the courtesy you showed me at Luisburg.' He replied: 'It was only my duty, and I shall always be glad to serve you in all things.' I was rinsing my mouth. Bernstorff and my mother were at the other side of the room, quite near. I vow our conversation ended there. That same evening he took leave of my father and my mother (who was holding my hand). She kissed him, and desired me to do the same. I withdrew my hand abruptly, and went to the other side of the room, whence I asked him in a loud voice to convey my respects to the Electress. Later on, my mother begged my pardon, and I asked her never to suggest such a thing again, as it annoyed me greatly.

"What Marshal Podevils told you surprises me. I thought they no longer suspected anything between us. I am not accusing 110; all my suspicions fall on 103.¹ Had 110 done so, he would have been the falsest of men; for he swore on his honour to warn me of anything that might be said about me, and assured me he never heard anything. Try to find out from Marshal Podevils who told him this gossip, for it is of consequence if the Elector suspects anything afresh; if not, I count it of no importance. They are all very much pleased with my conduct here; the Electress spoke of me in the highest terms. I little expected you to tell me you are still going with the army—if you can. The blow stuns me. Why did you let me think you were going to stay when you all along meant the contrary? I am deeply hurt to think you are going far away from me, perhaps for long. Were you to stay, in three week's time I should be able to see you again. How I long for it! How dull and tedious are the days! You are all my joy. *La Confidente* and I are always thinking how we can manage

¹ I cannot find the key to these numbers in the cypher.

things for you to come here; but the difficulties make me feel hopeless. I long for you with passionate longing.

"*Grand Dieu!* If you go away without seeing me I shall die! . . ."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, June 28 / July 8.

"I advise you not to speak of me so frequently, and not answer the Prince unless you wish to write to him; in that case you might say that you asked me when I took leave of you why I was not going to Flanders, and I said I had first to raise money to pay my debts in Flanders. I think you can easily say this; it would do neither harm nor good, so please yourself, and do whatever may be most *à propos*. Pray be on good terms with Bernstorff; but beware! Do not let him see you are estranged from the Prince, and don't let him guess that you wish the money to retire upon some day, and prevent your mother from making a fuss or saying anything about it. Mind you take my advice. You must not ignore the fact that everything Bernstorff knows La Platen knows; and business of this consequence is liable to be known by them simultaneously. Do not fret about my losses; they are not very great, and if I lose villages I gain a divinity, who is worth more to me than all the kingdoms put together. Your vows of constancy console me for all my troubles."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], Friday, June 30 / July 10.

"I witnessed yesterday a scene between my father and mother which gave me much food for thought. One could not imagine anything more unkind and bitter than the things they said to each other. Buccow¹ was the

¹ Buccow (*Le Bâtard*), the illegitimate son of the Duke of Celle.

cause; my father defended him, which made my mother desperately angry. I trembled to see two people whom love alone united so much exasperated at so little; indeed, they threatened to leave one another. Two hours after they made it up; but my mother was stung to the quick by my father's words, and with reason. You may imagine she has very little influence if she cannot succeed in a business she has so much at heart. It doesn't make me hopeful about my affair, for all my trust was in her, and I see it is enough for her to wish a thing for it not to be done. My father is hard beyond imagination. I am far from expecting great things of him, and I see from his manner towards my mother that one cannot believe in his kindness; so I am in a very bad humour to-day. . . ."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], *Friday, June 30 / July 10.*

Twelve o'clock midday.

“The life I have been leading since the Court returned must, I fear, give you cause for much jealousy, for I am playing every night with ladies, and, without vanity, they are not ugly nor of mean rank. I crave your pardon, but I cannot live without a little pleasure, and one of them is so much like you that I cannot help being in her society. You will be curious to know her name, but I will not tell, for fear you may forbid me to pay her my court. I cannot forget these delectable moments at Brockhausen. What pleasure! what transports! what ardour! what rapture we tasted together! and with what grief we parted! Oh, that I could live those moments over again! Would that I had died then, drinking deep of your sweetness, your exquisite tenderness! What transports of passion were ours! . . . I will always be

your true lover, absent or present, wherever you may be, and whatever may befall. La Platen has appeared dressed in a ridiculous yellow cloak."

"[HANOVER(?)], *Sunday*.

"You ask me to give up the campaign. I will obey you blindly without reflecting, but on one condition, if to save my honour I must needs go once more you will give me leave. They tell me that General Pless, in Denmark, is disgraced; and if that be so, that was the post they wanted to give me. The terms were very advantageous, but it does not matter now. The Elector has gone to Brockhausen, that charming place where you were. Will that sweet hour ever come again? One of my manœuvres to deceive my servants is to spend a few nights on the soft grass, unless it rains."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], *July*.

"I am inconsolable at finding so many difficulties in the way of our meeting, but I could not dream of exposing you to danger, and you know how dangerous it would be. Pity me! I have no comfort in the world but you, yet everything is against us. Your tender caresses still linger in my memory; I feel them still! Ah! how I long for a return of those moments! But the joy would kill me verily. Had I not received a letter from 205¹ before I got yours, you would have put me in a fever by speaking so much of your pleasures and the lady you flirted with; but I am free from anxiety, thanks to her, for she writes to me: 'Yesterday all the ladies were at Court; but they must have been very dull, for I saw our cour-

¹ This number cannot be traced; it must be some Court lady at Hanover.

tiers languishing and not flirting at all. A man must be *blasé* indeed to be reduced to playing with children. Yet that is what Königsmarck did all the evening; he passed the time making houses with cards for the little princess and the little chevalier.¹ I admired him for it, because he seemed anxious not to give his lady-love cause for jealousy—that is, if he has one, but it is hard to say whether he has or no.’ You may imagine how your ways delight me and bind me more strongly to you. But there is much malice, my very dear one, in leaving a poor woman in such dire anxiety, for you had not the charity to tell me the name of the lady with whom you were enjoying yourself. Except for knowing how admirably you behave, 205’s letter does not give me much pleasure; I am terribly afraid she may suspect something. You ought to be the proudest man going, for every one admires you. You are a universal favourite—even old ladies cry out about your charms. As for me, I count it the highest glory to possess such a lover. Love himself is not more beautiful and charming. You unite tenderness and faithfulness with the most perfect manners. Nothing is wanted to complete my bliss but to see you again and never leave you more. I spend many sleepless nights thinking about it all; it would be infinitely more pleasant were I to spend them in converse with you, Beloved. That is a joy I cannot hope to grasp for several days yet; but I am resolved not to delay much longer.

“The Electress told my mother that nothing could be more hideous than La Platen’s yellow cloak. I rejoice that neither she nor her cloak will come in my way. I am thine, my beautiful one. I will die all thine.”

¹ The little Princess Sophie Dorothea and Prince George Augustus. This and the following letter contain the only mention of the Princess’s children throughout the correspondence.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], July 2/12.

“I am grieved to hear that your mother has quarrelled so with your father about *Le Bâtard*. It is easy to see which side is the weaker, and I fear we can hope for nothing. You will be compelled to devote yourself more closely than ever to the Prince, and I shall have to seek some corner of the world, and beg for bread that I may not starve. Frankly, your father's conduct surprises me; there is no doubt it is prompted by *La Platen*, through *Bernstorff*, for she rules him absolutely and he is almighty with your father. Your preceding letter cheered me much, for it seemed that *Bernstorff* wished to interest himself on your behalf; but he is as deceitful as the devil, and thinks to trick you. Do not trust his smooth words, but let him show his good will in deeds. . . . The Elector has gone to *Herrenhausen*. I asked Prince Max where he is to be lodged, and—would you believe it?—he is to be put in your father's apartments next your own. You may imagine my dismay. I cannot advise you to return, for as soon as you are back they will make me march. When you are at *Herrenhausen* and Prince Max lodged, for all intents and purposes, in your apartments, and I forced to leave just when I hoped to find joy and satisfaction—when all this happens, what will become of me? I suffer every kind of misfortune—loss of money, family quarrels, and false friends; twenty men who were under me are advanced above me; now they are trying to make me lose my reputation, and, what is worse, I am always sent away from my own love.

“The party was very merry. The little prince and princess danced, but I did not join. I walked with some others by the river, and withdrew early, abandoning myself to my sorrow and tears, which I shed abundantly.

When I had undressed I paced alone on the ramparts until one o'clock. . . . Monsieur Rosse came here yesterday. He brings news that the Danes are marching and will surely bombard Hamburg. You cannot believe the joy this news gives me, for I may see you sooner than I thought. Marshal Podevils has left without any one knowing whither he has gone. That is mysterious. God grant us a happy ending to our troubles, for I am at the end of my tether!"

"[HANOVER], *Monday morning, July 3/13.*

"The enclosed letter will show you how my affair in Flanders is going on, and I send one also from my secretary; tell me what you think of it. It seems he wishes to free me from my chains, but they are borne with joy; all the arguments in the world will not make me go far away from you. Who are the people who are trying to draw Prince Max again into a troublesome intrigue? and how go things with your father and mother? Does your mother still hope to succeed in your cause, or has she given it up?

"I went to pay my respects to La Platen yesterday, and she proposed *une partie pour dîner chez un cabaretier*, each man to take his lady. I said promptly, 'I will take Madame la Capitaine.' La Platen became as red as scarlet, and screamed out, 'I will take Monsieur Balati.' She was in such temper all through dinner that every one noticed it. I doubt if she will forgive me the slight; but that is the least of my troubles. So long as you are faithful I count the rest as nothing."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[WIENHAUSEN], *Wednesday, July 5/15.*

"I am at last out of anxiety; to-night I received two of

your letters. I am grateful for your kindness in granting my prayer about the campaign, and I vow I will never ask anything that might harm your honour. As they tell you, Pless¹ is disgraced, and they formerly offered you his place; it is certain they will now offer it again. They are sounding you about it. I am terribly frightened every time promotion is offered you, though I am greatly distressed to think that I am the cause of your refusing it. Yet I should die of grief if you were to accept, for it would take you away from me so far that it would scarcely leave any hope of my seeing you again. You know well enough that without you life is nothing to me; you take the place of all. Do not abandon me for the sake of the love I bear you.

"I tremble at all you tell me about your embarrassments; I feel them more than if they were my own, for you are dearer to me than myself. My father and mother have quite made it up, and are on better terms than ever. I do not give up all hope of getting my wish, and I will not throw up the game even if they refuse me. But I find this a very unfavourable time, for they talk of nothing but the war, and difficulties arise on every side. We must wait until a more convenient season. My father is more affectionate to me than ever, and my mother overwhelms me with kindness; every day she assures me that all she possesses in the world is for me, so I am at rest about that. If only my father were the same I should be free of my troubles. I will die rather than 'devote myself to the Prince,' as you think I shall be compelled to do. There is no difficulty I will not conquer to be united to you. It is the dearest wish of my

¹"Monsieur Pless, who formerly belonged to the Prince of Denmark."—*Vide* Colt's *Despatches*.

heart, and I think I shall succeed. I trust to the good will of Bernstorff. My mother urges him every day to make the estates of the Duchy give me thirty thousand crowns; but this terrible war will delay the business.

"I gather from your letter that I must not think of coming back to Hanover while Max is lodged near me. We are really very unlucky; everything conspires to vex us, in little things as in great. I hope he will soon tire of staying at Herrenhausen and return here. If that happens, I shall start at once to join you. . . . You will always be the arbiter of my destiny. The more I read your letter the more I am touched by it. You tell me you will be obliged 'to seek some corner of the world and beg bread that you may not starve.' Do you count me as nothing? and do you think I will ever give you up, whatever may happen? If you were reduced to that extremity, be sure nothing in the world would hinder me from following you; I would starve with you. *Mais, Mon Dieu!* do not let us give way to such sad thoughts. We may perhaps be happier than we think. Let us love and comfort one another, whatever may befall. Perhaps our sorrows will end as I have foreshadowed; for I hope to get what I wish when things right themselves. I will continually urge it, so that it will be hard to resist me.

"You ask who are those who try to stir Max up again. They are Denmark and Wolfenbüttel. It is quite true, for my father told me, and it is feared he will yield. You have forgotten to send me your secretary's letter and the one from Flanders; pray remember to do so. I fear if you irritate La Platen too much she will revenge herself. Deal gently with her, but not too gently. I know well she will harm me all she can, but I love you so passionately that I cannot be reasonable."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.**"Tuesday evening.*

"I forgot to enclose the letters I mentioned, so I send them now. The review of my regiment prevents me from sending this by the midday post. My affairs in Sweden are as bad as they can be, and your prospects with your parents are perishing. It is enough to make us despair. . . . Some officers are just coming in; I am obliged to end. *Adieu, mon ange*: How dearly I love you! *Adieu*."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.**"[CELLE], Friday, July 7/17.*

"Are you not ashamed to write me such short letters? The one yesterday is rude in its curtness. I do not think there are more than ten lines. True, you make excuses about your officers and duties; but I am not satisfied with such reasons, for I have every day more obstacles than you will ever have all your life, yet I overcome them, and write letters so long that I fear they weary you. Your secretary's letter conceals something which you can easily find out if you like. Farewell. This will be short, after your example."

"[CELLE], Sunday, July 9/19, One o'clock in the afternoon.

"If the Count de Steinbock¹ and Count de la Gardie are still with you, and intend coming here, I entreat you to come with them. It is a feasible pretext. I don't think any one could find fault. I hope when you get here Love will aid us, and we shall find means of seeing one another. It will be much easier to see you here

¹ Count Steinburg (or Steinbock) was an Imperial envoy, who was probably at Hanover trying to arrange matters about the Danes on the part of the Emperor. Colt mentions him a little later as being in the Palatinate on a similar mission.

without any fuss. I shall die if I have not the joy of embracing you. I picture such delights when we meet that I am in ineffable transports. Should you come, let me know beforehand, so that the excess of my joy may not betray me. I tremble lest it may lead me to do some dangerous, extravagant, and ridiculous thing."

"[CELLE], *Monday, July 10/20.*

"If you knew the joy the eagerness you show for us to live together some day gives me you would see I have nothing else in my head but to succeed in the business I have in hand. I have always feared it was only your kindness for me that made you suggest it, and your inclination had no real part; but I am quite free of that trouble now, for it really seems you want it as much as I do. Be sure I have nothing so near my heart, and I shall move heaven and earth to succeed. Can you doubt that I would sacrifice with pleasure the whole universe for you? I ask of God only an opportunity to prove what I say. I count all else as nothing: you alone suffice for me. My ambition is limited to pleasing you and keeping your heart true. You take the place of crowns, kingdoms, and thrones to me, and all the universe would not console me for your loss.

"I don't think I can make Max move from where he is lodged at Herrenhausen; I have no pretext, for our apartments are quite separate, and have no communication whatever except by one door, which I can close if I choose. All my women will be lodged around me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday morning, July 11/21.*

"You are glad, I believe, I wrote you that short letter, so that you might have something to scold me about. I

did it on purpose, so you might know by experience what it is like. I have more than ten of yours even shorter than mine, but *I* did not call you rude for so writing. You have license to call me what you like, but you are unjust not to accept the excuse of my military duties. I know one ought never to admit any obstacle to one's love, but, *ma chérie*, how many times have you not made excuses—the sentinel, the watch, or some silly tale of people hanging about? Have I ever said a word? have I not shown more forbearance than you? You are very imprudent to play cards with the General and his wife; you certainly will not win much. He is a very gallant general—at least Prince Max told me so—but he forgets his place in praising you so highly. I should like to see you playing with him—with your smiles and graces. How you will receive this attention and that! and what sweet glances you will cast him to reward him! How your eyes will sparkle at his compliments! I fancy I see you: I know your airs. Don't think I am jealous; it doesn't matter to me. I know you cannot live without admiration, and therefore it is better that it should come from an old fool than a young fop. I talked to Prince Max about your father's affection for you, and he agreed with me that it is *un amitié de singe*, since he does nothing for you. True parental love consists in settling on one's daughter a comfortable sum; and it is just now that your father ought to do it, for if he should be ruined [by the Danes], on what would you live?"

“[HANOVER], *Friday, July 14/24.*

“If Count Steinbock had been going to Celle I would have accompanied him; but as he is not, I cannot gather from your letter how I am to come. You disguise your hand so much that I can hardly make out what you write.

I should dearly love to come and see you; but it is difficult, for Count Steinbock has gone, and they don't speak about my marching, so I must come *incognito*. But, before I can come disguised, I must have instructions, and it is not easy unless I am well posted in what I am to do; I might take a wrong step and ruin everything. I cannot gather from your letter what it is you wish, and I cannot make out from the feigned writing which way I am to come, or even where you are, or how I am to keep myself hidden when I get to Celle."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], Saturday. July 15/25.

"As the two counts have gone away, you have no longer any pretext for coming here openly. I did not think the thing was possible otherwise. I am opposed to your coming disguised: it is too dangerous, and, as you say, it might ruin us for ever. Do you think that if I had been able to find some way of seeing you I should have waited for you to ask me how? I should have taken advantage of it long since, and not have pined like this. Do not dream of coming here without my knowledge; it would be a miracle if you escaped, and there are no miracles in the times we live. You seem displeased because I don't tell you positively about my return. You are absolutely master of my movements, and if you read my letters carefully you will see what I mean. I quite understand it is not pleasant for you that I should be lodged so near Max; and therefore I am compelled, in spite of my longing to see you, to stay here. You suspect no end of things; you imagine that if I had a real wish I could find no end of pretexts to come. I thought you would be satisfied with my delicacy about Max. It seemed to me that if you could have

induced him to come here, I could seize the advantage by starting the very day he left Hanover. But do you decide, and do you think that any reason or consideration whatever will prevent me from coming to you. I will wait for your answer that I may do as you wish; but, for goodness' sake! make it so clear and straightforward that I shall not misunderstand."

"[CELLE], *Monday, July 17/27.*

"I do not think you will stay long enough in Hanover for me to see you there. My father is in great trouble. The Danes are advancing, and have everything necessary to cross the Elbe. That will put me at a greater distance from you. Everything combines to make me despair. I dare not, in the state matters are, press my father about my affairs, for if the war turns out badly things will go hard with him.

"The beginning of your letter is charming. You assure me you will risk your life to see me. How can I show you my gratitude for all your tenderness? But perhaps you no longer feel like this, and your love has gone. If that be so, I wish for death! Without your love what have I to do with life? It would only trouble me, since it is for you I wish to live. I wrote to you yesterday all that you wish to know; that is why I say no more. Your answer will govern my movements; I may possibly get it to-morrow night very late. I am sure the week will not pass without your having to march; everything they say makes me think so. In case that should be, and I may not be able to go to you, I will point out what you are to do to see me here."

"*Twelve at midnight.*

"My mother tells me to-night that she wishes to take

me to Madame Colt's¹ to-morrow. I fear it may hinder me from writing to you—a grief to me; for, were I to write every moment of the day, my pen would never run dry on the subject of my love. I think of nothing but of seeing you soon; the thought fills me with joy. I asked Chauvet, who came back from Engesen to-night, whether my father would set out this week. He assured me that he would not, and said the Elector and my father would not leave each other; so at last I have arrived within sight of my desire, and no longer fear hindrance in the way of seeing you. I much approve of your advice, and am acting upon it with all possible despatch. I believe we shall be fortunate and have everything we wish. I am beginning to hope that good luck will at last attend us. Every day my affairs improve; I will give you details about them when we meet. Only Max worries me. I will not suffer him to stay where he is at Herrenhausen; but as I go to Hanover first, and not to Herrenhausen until late the next day, I hope to be two nights running in Hanover. Perhaps they will let me spend the remainder of the week there. But I feel sure the Elector and my father will set out together, and in that case Max will go with them. I will do exactly as you wish; you have only to say what I am to do. Let me find you tender and loving. You will be very cold if you resist all the love I shall bring to bear on you. I think I shall die in your arms; my rapture will kill me. Adieu. Do not forget to come to me the very day I arrive. Were you to fail, I should never forgive you as long as I live. Farewell. In the spirit I kiss you again and again; I would give half my blood to be kissing you in reality."

¹Lady Colt, who lived at Celle.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], Monday, July 17/27.

“I went to dinner yesterday at La Platen’s; she showed me a letter from the Electoral Prince, which was very kind, very long, and rather familiar. I hope this news will not give you ground for jealousy, and I hope, too, the fact that Monsieur de la Sitardie is at the point of death will not make you too sad. The young Countess von Platen¹ is very ill, so all the house is in grief. They say the Prince will come back loaded with laurels, so it seems there has been something to do over there after all. . . . I did all I could to induce Prince Max to go to Celle, but he declared that he had business here which prevented him. I rage about it. . . . There is no news here about the Danes, which makes me hope I shall not march for some time. I shall certainly go through Celle if we march towards the Elbe, but I mean to have a private audience of you, so prepare yourself for it. It seems to me that going to the comedy every day means that you are enjoying yourself. I do not grudge you pleasure; on the contrary, I am glad, provided the gallants do not come into your box and whisper sweet things in your ear, as I hear certain people do at the comedy. I am delighted you should enjoy yourself, and will try to do the same,—that is why I have asked our ministers to supper. La Platen will not be one of us because of her daughter’s illness. I fear none of them will be so amusing or witty as your company, but I can live without amusement and you cannot.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

“[CELLE], Wednesday, July 19/29.

“At last I have your answer, the one I have been wait-

¹ Countess Platen’s daughter.

ing for impatiently to determine my movements; but I am not the wiser. All I can make out is that you do not want me to come for a few days. At any other time I should have been very angry, but now I am as indifferent as you. You seem to be very phlegmatic about all I do, and I assure you I am equally so as regards yourself. I am rather glad to be in this mood, for otherwise I should have been hurt about the *fête* you gave last night to La Platen and other ladies. Stubenfol gave a full account of it at the dinner table. 'Everybody was delighted. No party could have gone off better; everything showed forethought and gallantry.' I am not surprised you surpassed yourself, the ladies were well worth the trouble, and when a host is inspired by such charming guests he must needs succeed to perfection. It is easy for me to follow your advice. I feel quite content to stay here as long as it pleases you. Many thanks for all the news you tell me. I am not jealous of La Platen because she has had a letter from the Prince. I am delighted to see so fine a union. I also send no end of good wishes for the continuation of your pleasures; I should be quite distressed to interrupt them by my presence. I don't know how you expect me to reconcile the eagerness you pretend to show concerning my movements with the indifference you display by your conduct. If you had even a little consideration for me you would not behave as you do. Continual pleasure-parties take place. But I am wrong to complain or to find fault with *your* behaviour; it is *my* conduct, forsooth, that is open to criticism! I go, you say, every day to the comedy; the gallants whisper in my ear; they caress me in the box! Is it to fill up your paper that you tell such falsehoods? There is not a word of truth in them. Since I have been here they have played a comedy only twice, and each

time I have been in my father's box alone with him. I am always considering your wishes: I am ashamed of it, for I carry consideration much farther than you deserve. But I have said enough on the subject; it is so unpleasant that I am very glad to end it.

"You wish me, I believe, to tell you about my affairs. Yesterday I read over my marriage contract; it could hardly be more disadvantageous to me. The Prince is absolutely master of everything, for there is nothing I can dispose of without his consent. Even the clause about my dower is so badly worded that they can easily cheat me and take it away.¹ I was very much surprised at this unexpected blow, and so hurt that tears started to my eyes. My mother was moved, and tried to comfort me; nothing could be more tender or kind than what she said to me. She even went so far as to offer to sell her jewels so as to settle on me some sort of an income. At last we decided it would be better to speak to my father first, as perhaps he would be able to put the matter right. My mother did so this morning, and his answer was favourable. I hope I shall get what I want. My mother advised me to talk to Stubenfol, and ask him

¹ A fragment of this letter relating to the Princess's marriage settlement is quoted (in the original French) by Palmblad in his *Aurora Königsmarck*, and Dr. Köcher has seized on it as an inaccuracy which goes to prove that the letters are not genuine. Yet it is substantially correct. The Duke of Celle was undoubtedly beguiled into a marriage contract most unfavourable to his daughter. He gave her a marriage portion of one hundred thousand thalers and the estates already settled on her. The one hundred thousand thalers promptly went into the Hanoverian coffers (there was no Married Woman's Property Act in those days). The estates were not disposed of so easily. If no son were born, these estates, particularly the lordship of Wilhelmsburg, were to remain the Princess's; and should the Prince die before his consort, this property and all its revenues were to revert to his widow, and her children could only inherit them after

to push the thing also, to show him my marriage contract, and point out how unjust it is to me; so that without any one being able to guess my plans, I have the finest pretext ever known."

"[CELLE], *Thursday*.

"I am even angrier to-day than I was yesterday. The more I think of what you have done the more I find cause for annoyance. You have reason to be thankful for having delayed my return, for had I arrived piqued as I am you would surely have had a piece of my mind. I don't know why I revert so often to the same grievance, but, though I wish to speak to you on other subjects, I unconsciously fall back on this one. The cause is not hard to find. Your unkindness cuts me to the heart, and, though I ought to get used to it, I cannot help being sensitive. Here are three unkind things all at once, which one surely should not expect from a man who prides himself on his delicacy and values his love so highly. You will remember you went to a feast at La Platen's two hours after I left Hanover for Luisburg, in spite of the overwhelming grief in which you left me and the sorrow you pretended to show. You had enough self-control to hide your sadness so well at the feast that

her death, and, as a widow, the Princess was to be entitled to a dower of twelve thousand thalers. But the Princess had a son, Prince George Augustus, and so these estates were locked up; she could not realise them or raise money on them in any way. She was not likely to become a widow (however devoutly she might hope for that consummation), and so she was penniless, with nothing of her own save the allowance the Elector of Hanover thought fit to dole out to her for her dress and petty expenses. Her father, of course, might subsidize her occasionally, but that was merely a matter of his good will. Hence her efforts to obtain a sufficient sum to enable her to set up a separate establishment and be independent. In this, as in other things, the evidence is all in favour of the absolute genuineness of these letters.

no one perceived it. The second party, which you say was so innocent, and which I am willing to believe was so, since you wish it, took place a week ago; and your most magnificent and brilliant entertainment the day before yesterday. Here are three parties in a very short time to my knowledge, not counting those I shall never know about, which, being secret, are doubtless all the sweeter to you. I am beginning to get used to your unkindness, and so far from spending the night weeping and wailing, as I was weak enough to do at Luisburg, I sleep very well, and wake up fortified and angrier than ever. I am quite convinced that this is a matter of indifference to you either way, because if you had ever so little regard for me you would have behaved very differently. But I am certain you do not love as I do, and renounce all pleasure; you are incapable of so strong a passion. Do not restrain yourself, I entreat you. Think only of your pleasures; count me as nothing. No doubt all these revelries will terminate in a complete reconciliation between you and La Platen, or some fresh intrigue. If only my wishes are needed to contribute to your happiness, you can have them: there is no joy I do not wish you. It so happens that Fortune, to give me revenge, has sent hither to-day a young baron from Mayence. He is very handsome, well built, and magnificent. You are no doubt willing that, rather than die of *ennui*, I should amuse myself with him! I believe you to be still too much my friend to refuse me that little comfort. You see, I am franker than you, for though you sent me word of your *fête* you said nothing about the ladies and La Platen coming to it; yet the whole thing was got up for her! Of a truth, I am well repaid for living like a nun and shunning every one, even men of sixty, *mais n'importe*. I will say no more! You ought to be

ashamed of yourself to act as you do. I will not reproach you; you ought to reproach yourself. But it shows, alas! there is very little love proof against absence. Unfortunately for me, my love does not lessen, and I am too tender and sensitive. Teach me how to learn the secret of indifference. I must end this. In spite of all my resolutions, it might escape me that I love you, and I would rather die than tell you so to-day."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"Wednesday, July 19/29.

"My banquet, as you call it, was a very dull affair, though La Platen came with her husband. The young countess is still very ill. Madame Busche's coach-horses took fright and bolted, and the ladies were so unnerved by the accident that they scarcely spoke two words, added to which it was very bad weather, for fine rain set in and a great wind arose which made us break up very early: they all went home before eleven o'clock. I did not sit at the centre table, as there was no room; I supped with Harrenburg and a lieutenant of my regiment, and was delighted to have a pretext to escape from my guests. I was a very convenient host: they will not boast much about my attentiveness. But how could I be attentive when I was so *distract* and my heart far away with you? I vow I thought more of you than of all my guests put together. My reason for giving the supper was because I am going away soon, and it was the right thing for me to do. I have been so often to their dinners that it was necessary for me to make some return. Do not think I did it to court any one, or with any thought of intrigue. I vow, on my perdition, it was not so. I have told you the true reason; there was none other, I swear to you. Don't draw unjust comparisons

As a man, I am compelled to do many things which as a woman you need not do. Some one has been telling me I have become so odd that it is no use seeking my company. I said: 'When good fortune forsakes a man, what would you have him do? I get no promotion and I am losing all my possessions.' He answered: 'What about love?' I replied: 'I no longer think of it.' But God forgive me, it was the greatest untruth I have ever told in my life."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"CELLE, Friday, July 21/31.

"Since you tell me your party was dull and tedious, and everybody went home early, I am fain to believe you; though Stubenfol said nobody ever was so merry a host as you, and the party did not break up until after midnight. I can quite believe you found the time so short: the company was too pleasant to admit of weariness. You must give me leave to doubt that you thought more about me than of any one present. I am not vain enough to flatter myself so much. I count myself happy if you think of me in your spare time (should you have any), for every one is talking about your entertainments and continual parties, at which you shine so brilliantly. I rather think you spoke the truth when you said you 'no longer thought of love.'

"But I must speak of something else. I want to forget all about that affair: my thoughts kill me. I should have been willing to defer my return to Hanover for a few days had your *fête* not taken place just then to distress me, for the very moment you ask me to stay here you plunge into deeper pleasures there. What can I think of your conduct? Must it not convince me that you did not want me, so that you might better amuse your-

self, and you feared my presence would be a hindrance? You ask me to comfort you, but it is from you I expect comfort. I certainly have no pretext for staying at Hanover only three or four days; I shall very likely be there for twelve or fifteen days at least, so take precautions accordingly. I think you will know your movements before the end of next week, and when you are certain, let me know positively what you wish me to do. I shall not think of leaving here until you let me know."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, Friday, July 21/31.

"I have received your very charming letter. Your 'handsome and well made man' and Monsieur le Huguenot more than convince me that you find your stay at Celle very pleasant. All I have to say is this—if you are not pleased with me, I am even less pleased with you, and if this sort of thing goes on I will no longer be your dupe. I am quite able to find answers to all your accusations, but I will shorten my letter for fear of keeping you from a pleasant conversation or a walk. I am, Madame, with much respect, all yours."

"Sunday, July 23/August 2.

"At last I am in a fit state to answer you about your baron from Mayence. I have taken a few hours to settle my bile, and I am now cool enough to write and tell you the vengeance you propose to take is too small, even if I have sinned as much as you think; but my oaths, attested by Gohr and d'Els, whom I can call as witnesses, must surely convince you that Stubenfol lied. Don't you think you have been a little quick to take your revenge? I must needs send my witnesses, since you will not believe my word of honour. In any case, I will never forgive

your tricks with the baron. Your natural tendency shows itself again. You are only too glad to seize any pretext for flirting; you would rather die than miss the chance; What am I to think of you? You know my weakness: I am naturally jealous, and such behaviour as yours makes me a hundred times worse. How many times have you urged me not to give way to violence, but first to hear your excuses and the truth? If you were piqued about my supper, why didn't you write and scold me as much as you liked? But no! you were too charmed with the baron; he is young, well made, handsome, and captivates you,—that is why you find, or pretend to find, my conduct so guilty. Oh! it is too much! I can no longer deceive myself. Your letter of Friday confirms my worst fears. Your excuses for not coming here do not deceive me. You are the most unfaithful of women. Go to, cruel one! and flirt with your new cavalier. Why have you held me so long with your deceitful airs and promises? Why have I sacrificed everything for you? You are not content to take away my peace of mind, but you rob me of my honour, my reputation, and all I have in the world. Is it not for such as you that I have neglected everything? You know the state of my affairs. I am nicely rewarded, truly! I will fly from Hanover, where I might meet you. Did not my house force me to stay here, I would leave to-morrow. I hope, however, to find an honourable pretext for getting away; and should the Danes confiscate my lands in Holstein, that will serve. Madame, I am not dishonest, like you. I will send you back everything I have belonging to you, and as soon as I get to Hamburg I will take counsel with my friends as to my future plans. I will return to my own people, and though I may have neglected them the future shall make amends. 'The continual ceremonies in which I shine'

are with my dragoons; I am with them every day, drilling them, and for three days I have not been anywhere except to the hunt, in which I take part every day. Have I not always given you the choice of coming here or staying at Celle? I did it on purpose to see if you had sufficient love to risk coming; but I soon saw something was keeping you back, though I was ignorant of its being a 'handsome, well-built young baron.' You now ask me to tell you positively what you are to do. Why the devil should you want *me* to give you directions? Were I to tell you to stay and amuse yourself with your new lover, or were I to tell you to come here, it would not matter—you would find some excuse for quarrelling with me in either case."

"Saturday, July 24 / August 3.

"My letter of yesterday has no doubt surprised you. When I read it over I said to myself: 'Is it possible I could come to such a pass as to write such a letter to the woman who is dearer to me than all the world?' I was ashamed to send it, but after reading your letter three times I determined to send mine on to you. Looking at things in the right light, I ought to be more manly; I ought not to be so sensitive. I am much obliged to Stubenfol for spreading such monstrous reports about my banquet. You know the man he is—'Much ado about nothing.' I don't wonder he found my banquet a fine one, for he ate six partridges all by himself, and drank a whole barrel of sherry. It was the finest and grandest festival he ever attended—was it? Give him the same thing in a pigstye and he will exaggerate it into having been served in the finest flower-garden of Italy. . . . I was coming to the baron presently, but, for fear I should lose my temper, I will try to go to sleep

instead: it is two o'clock. If I went on much longer I should write things I should be sorry to say to a lady."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE, undated.]

"I expected to receive an infinity of excuses from you, and the most beautiful things ever written, to appease me. I was much deceived, for I found your letter quite the contrary: you are still too proud to beg my pardon. I could not help laughing to see how you fell into my trap, and now my 'baron' sticks in your throat. Your anger gives me so much joy that I have forgotten mine. I am delighted to have revenged myself singly, and I like myself all the better for it. I hope you will be free from anxiety before you receive this letter, for I have sent you the portrait of the personage, and that suffices. But the idea of your giving yourself such airs! I am the injured one, yet you scold me! That is rather an odd way to seek reconciliation. How tired I am of being angry—otherwise you would not be let off so easily. But I have a weakness for you which will not suffer me to quarrel with you for long. I should be delighted to make it up with you: you have only to make my mind easy about your banquet, and swear you love me as much as ever. I will forget and forgive everything, and make you see in return that you are very wrong to be dissatisfied with me, for I deserve all your love, and do everything to please you. When you have realised the injustice you do me by your mad imaginings, you will ask my pardon, and deeply repent of your bad and wicked thoughts. I fear our first interview will be spent wholly in explanations, and the love and tenderness which alone ought to be present will be conspicuous by its absence; but you will have it so—it is not my fault.

"I am coming to you on Tuesday or Wednesday. I have already sent you word by Stubenfol, and I hope to find you tender and faithful. If you be not I shall die, for I am fain to confess that I love you to distraction: in spite of all my anger and annoyance, I have never loved you more.

"I forgot to speak about what you told me a few days ago—that you had made a vow to keep the sixth¹ commandment if we should ever live together. There are no vows I would not joyfully make to be with you always, too: I wish for nothing else in the world; all my thoughts are bent upon it."

¹ The seventh in our liturgy.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DANES

There is not in the fierce world anything,
Scorn, agony, stripes, bonds, fears, woes, deep shame,
Kingdomless ruin, but with open hands,
With joyous bosom open as to love,
Yea, with soul thankful for its great delight,
And life on fire with joy, for this love's sake
I would not embrace and take it to my heart.

SWINBURNE.

THE Princess came back to Hanover, and a few days later Königsmarck set out for the war, so their meetings were few and brief. She was expected to proceed to Herrenhausen, where the Electoral Court then was; but she lingered in Hanover, excusing herself on the ground that Prince Max's apartments at Herrenhausen adjoined those set apart for her. The excuse was flimsy, for Prince Max had recently been staying with her parents at Celle while she was there; and though his gallantry had once threatened to exceed the friendship allowed to a brother-in-law, that was long ago, and he now treated her with only ordinary courtesy. But she had raised a similar objection successfully at Luisburg, and it served to delay her visit to Herrenhausen until Königsmarck left Hanover. His orders to march came suddenly, on his return from a visit to the Princess, and he had to start the same night without wishing her good-bye. He left her apartments piqued because she seemed to be in a hurry for him to go: in truth, she was con-

scious of being watched by spies, and snatched every moment of her lover's company with a fearful joy. The first of the following letters of the Princess was written before she knew Königsmarck had left Hanover for the campaign; the next two or three describe an interview she had with Countess Platen, of which the most notable point is that the Countess tried to persuade Sophie Dorothea that it was not she, but the Electress Sophia, who had made mischief with the Elector about her intimacy with Königsmarck. The Princess's letters end with reproaches to her lover for having left her so unkindly, and having sent her no word since he went away.

“[HANOVER], *Monday, July 30/August 9.*

“It is four o'clock, and I can no longer hope to see you to-day. *Que je suis malheureuse! Vous n'êtes pas content de moi.* I fancy your good-bye was not so tender as it ought to have been. I am overwhelmed with many troubles. You are going away, and I shall not see you for ever so long. I am so distressed that I wish myself dead this very moment. I have not slept, I have a dreadful beating of my heart, and I am so grieved at not seeing you to-day that I am almost beside myself. Life is unbearable without you: how cruel of you to doubt it! I cannot forgive your cruel injustice last evening. Is it possible you think me capable of feeling joyous and gay on the eve of your departure—I, who would like to be dead all the days I spend without you, and only live when I see you again?

“My mother has written to me about Max. This is what she says:—*‘Je ne conseille pas, moi de s'embarrasser du voisinage; si le voisin fait trop de bruit, il n'y a que faire passer votre lit dans l'antichambre; par là vous éviterez le bruit, et vous éloignerez du galant.’*

I shall know what to do! My mother also tells me the Electress has thanked her for letting me come back, and said she was delighted to see me again. My mother says, considering the kindness the Electress shows me, it is the right and proper thing for me to have left my parents and pay her my court, but she hopes at some future time the Electress will be good enough to let me return to Celle. That makes me despair more than ever, for I dare not hurry my return home, since my mother does not wish it, and I have only just come back to Hanover."

"[HANOVER], *Monday, Eleven at night.*

"I have been to Herrenhausen. The Electress told me she had spoken to the Elector, and he thought it absurd for me to imagine such things about Max, and said: 'It is only a silly excuse she is making. I'll take care that Max won't thrust himself upon her in any way.' He also said many other things, too long for me to tell all at once. When he had finished talking, the Electress asked him if she were to repeat everything he had said to me. At first he said: 'Everything you like,' but afterwards he said: 'No.' I asked if the Elector wished me to remain ignorant of what he had said, because then he wouldn't understand my coming to Herrenhausen after saying I should stay in Hanover, and the Electress (who is by way of being very attentive to me) said she would write to me a note to-morrow with full instructions what I am to do, but, whatever happens, I shall now be here the whole week. The Elector will be obliged to start in a few days, and, from what the Electress says, Max will be one of the party.

"La Confidante went last night to La Platen's, who talked a good deal about me. She said that people do not understand the retired life I lead, and every one is

talking about it; but that is the least of my troubles, for I scorn the whole world so long as we love one another. I had hoped, as I can see you no longer, that I should receive a line from you to-day; I am much disappointed that nothing has come. I wonder I have the strength to write to you. I am distressed beyond words at your departure on this campaign. *Mon Dieu!* why have you gone? What would I not give to scold you in person for the injustice you did me yesterday when you thought I wanted you to leave me sooner than usual? I would give my warm blood and very life to lengthen the moments we spend together.

"La Confidente says that La Platen asks to see me to-morrow; I fear she wants an explanation. I expect to be terribly lectured about my ways, but I will answer her as she deserves. Max is ill: I wish he were ill enough to change his quarters. I am ill too, but my sickness comes from loving you, and only you can soothe my pain and cure me."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday, August 1.*

"I cannot be comforted because I see you no longer. I am sad, too, at not having had a word from you; there may be some coldness, and I love you so passionately that I wish myself dead if you love me not likewise. I had a note this morning from the Electress, and she says: 'The Elector told me over again the same things I told you yesterday—that it would be absurd for you not to come to Herrenhausen through such unfounded scruples, and he will answer for any slander they may circulate; Max will not force himself on you in any way, and you have only to lock the door. So it rests with you to come whenever you like, when you have quite done making a fuss.' She adds to that much love. I will

turn and twist as much as I possibly can, so that the Elector will have gone before I get there.

"I fear the letter I wrote to you yesterday has not the smallest amount of sense in it. I was in a pitiable state, for your abrupt departure shows that you are not pleased with me, and I was so ill I could hardly bear myself. La Platen is coming to see me; I will tell you our conversation before I go to bed.

"Eleven at night.

"I have had a three hours' *tête-à-tête* with La Platen. The most important part of the conversation is that she knows that the Electress lectured me last year about you, and said that so far from the Electress speaking to the Elector in the way she wished me to believe, *c'est elle qui lui en a rompu la tête, et que jamais l'électeur ne lui a dit un mot*, and afterwards the Electress told several people that she had warned me to change my conduct with you, as it did you harm. La Platen then went on to entreat me to alter my ways [*changer de manière*], saying I lead such a retired life that everybody wonders at it. People were complaining that I neither look at nor speak to them; I could not imagine all they say, because it was not natural for a woman of my age to turn her back so decidedly on society, and they are seeking to find the cause of it all. I answered that if I had made any difference between one and another, if I had not treated everybody in the same way, people would have had a right to find fault; but as I favoured nobody, they have no cause to complain. She spoke several times about you; she is only too pleased with you. At last we parted as intimates; no friendship could have been confirmed by more promises than she made me.

"I have not been out of my room to-day, and my jour-

nal will be very long. I am going to bed, as I am worn out, but I shall not be able to sleep. How can I, when I have such a big boy as you in my head?"

“[HANOVER], *August 5.*

“This is the sixth day since you left, and I have not had a word from you. What neglect and what disdain! In what way have I deserved such treatment? Is it for loving you to adoration, for having sacrificed everything? But what use to remind you of this? My suspense is worse than death; nothing can equal the torments this cruel anxiety makes me suffer. What an ill fate is mine, good God! What shame to love without being loved! I was born to love you, and I shall love you as long as I live. If it be true that you have changed, and I have no end of reasons for fearing so, I wish you no punishment save that of never finding, wherever you may be, a love and fidelity equal to mine. I wish, despite the pleasures of fresh conquests, you may never cease to regret the love and tenderness that I have shown you. You will never find in the whole world any one so loving and so sincere. I love you more than woman has ever loved man. But I tell you the same things too often; you must be tired of them. Do not count it ill, I implore you, nor grudge me the sad consolation of complaining of your harshness. I am very anxious for fear they have detained the letter you were to have written to me from Celle. I have not received a word; everything conspires to crush me. Perhaps in addition to the fact that you no longer love me, I am on the eve of being utterly lost. It is too much all at once; I shall break down under it. I must end this to-morrow; I shall go to Communion. Farewell. I forgive you all you make me suffer.”

This is the last of the Princess's letters preserved in

this correspondence; she ends as she began, full of love and tender reproaches. The remaining letters are written by Königsmarck, and we have to invoke the aid of external evidence to fill up the blanks. Unfortunately this is meagre, for Colt (whose entry book has been a trusty guide) had left Celle on his last diplomatic mission early in July. His orders were to attend the Elector of Saxony during his campaign on the Rhine. The fatigue of the long marches was too much for him, and he died suddenly at the Saxon headquarters, in August, a martyr to duty if ever there were one, leaving his widow, who was at Celle, very badly off. He was succeeded by Cresset, who did not take up his duties at the Courts of Celle and Hanover until the following January.

The campaign against the Danes does not appear to have come to a regular engagement; the object of the northern Powers was rather to frighten the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover into submission than to drive them to open warfare; and even when the two armies were in sight of one another, separated only by the Elbe, a truce was being negotiated. Königsmarck gives a brief account of his march to the Elbe, which seems to have been from Hanover to Celle, thence to Lüneburg viâ Epsdorff.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“ [ON THE MARCH], *Saturday, Aug. 5/Tuesday, Aug. 15.*

“I hope you had my letter yesterday; it was sent by express, but I fear it may not have been delivered to you. I went to dinner at Celle. Their Highnesses asked me if Madame la Princesse were still in Hanover. I told them I had the honour of playing cards with her and Madame l'Electrice on Saturday and since then I had seen neither of them. Bülow gave me so much to

drink *que j'avais une bonne raidis*. Later they took me to Madame Boidavis's; but I don't remember what I did or said there, and as I had to return to my quarters, I did not stay very long. Monsieur Goritz arrived after dinner. He talked along time with Monseigneur le Duc, and I had the honour of conversing with Madame la Duchesse. We talked of serious and pressing matters, but I had so much wine afterwards that I have clean forgotten the conversation, wherefore I am very sorry. Thus the day ended. Wednesday and Thursday went by in marching, hunting, and being very badly lodged. Friday, August 4, I had your letter. Don't think I had forgotten you; all the time I was thinking of you, whatever work my regiment may have given me. I even forgot my duties dreaming of you; you are the only being in the world who would make me forget them. My great anxiety is lest you should be at Herrenhausen. You know what that means: Prince Max is there. . . . I cannot forget how you hurried me out of your apartments last Monday—God knows for what reason. But, *ma chérie*, don't think I suspect you of any mean design—no, I believe you are incapable of any such thing; it was because it was absolutely necessary that I should go, lest we should be discovered. . . . Adieu, *mon ange*. Think of him who worships you, and don't let him go out of your thoughts for one moment. Believe me loving and faithful and proof against all. Hell and its torments will never make me change. I will be faithful until death, and after death."

"[ON THE MARCH], *August 6/16*.

"Your letter clearly shows that you will always remain a child and let every one govern you. Your mother orders your movements more than you do yourself

Because, i' faith, she tells you the Electress is so kind that you should pay her great attention, you are let in for staying at Herrenhausen and Hanover, in spite of your wishes and mine. Pull yourself together, and remember you are a woman and no longer a child. Don't let them lead you by the nose in this way. It is shameful! Such childish fears do not become true-born hearts. Follow your own inclinations, not those of others. I daresay if La Platen ordered you to live in a particular way you would obey her, especially if she told you the Elector thought it right. He has only to say it is 'absurd' for you to change your plans, and forget in a moment all that you have sworn a thousand times to me. Say to your heart, 'Courage, heart of mine.' "

“[FROM THE CAMP], *August 6/16.*

“I hope my two preceding letters have reached you. This morning I received yours of August 1. I hope you will be satisfied with what I told you. I did not fail to remember you, but I could not help my letter miscarrying; I swear that I sent it by that peasant. . . . I vow by all that is holy my love for you has not lessened. If my conduct has altered, it is because I saw you so different that I hardly knew you. While I see you so timid and troubled what am I to think? You will not run the least risk for me. If what La Platen told you be true, the Electress's favour will please you mightily. Remember what I have told you about her. I doubt whether the Elector ever spoke to the Electress, or if she ever troubled him on the subject. I know you must be careful. La Platen may be right about that coincidence; there is much likelihood, for the Elector's haughtiness does not agree with what the Electress told you. I wonder you still cringe to the Electress as you do; she will be

your ruin sooner or later. I should send her to the devil if I were in your place; but you count her as one of your best friends. She has told you so many untruths that she may not have spoken at all to the Elector about Prince Max, and I firmly believe she has not done so.

“If you had followed my advice, you would not have given any explanation at all to La Platen about your conduct. You would have answered curtly, ‘I do as I please’; and it would have been better. If she be pleased with me, it is because I disapproved of my sister’s conduct and pretended to keep in with her. I don’t disapprove of your making up your quarrel with her, but I hope you will be wise enough not to tell her anything that might do you the least harm. God save you from her. You must look upon her as one of your greatest enemies. I am not in the least surprised she spoke to you of me—she is brazen enough for anything. I should like to have seen you together—a haughty mistress like her with so timid a child as you! I am surprised you saw her alone. I defy her to tell you the least thing about me which might shake your trust. If I have said anything pleasant to her, it was only on very indifferent matters, and at a time when I had quarrelled with you. Do not complain about my temper, I implore you; no one could be gentler than I am, and I am learning to be patient. You know I hate La Platen with a deadly hatred, and it is indifferent to me whether she comes here or not. I am too much occupied in thinking of you. I love you, I adore you now with as much ardour as I have ever done. Had I not written to you, you would have been right in saying that I don’t love you, but this is the third letter I have written on the march. I could not do more, for I have only been at villages where the post does not pass near by leagues. I don’t in the least

deserve your reproaches, though I read them with some pleasure; for I see tenderness mingled with anger. Ah! if you loved me as I love you, how happy I should be! But, *ma chérie*, our last evening together was not all that I would have wished. I could not write before I left Hanover, for when I got home I found everything packed up and ready to start, and I was in such despair I jumped on my horse and rode out of the town as fast as I could Farewell. My superior officers have arrived—Prince Max also."

"[ON THE MARCH], *August 11/21.*

"Since twelve o'clock the night before last I have been perpetually on horseback, and I rode more than twelve leagues without setting foot to the ground. No engagement has yet taken place, though we are within speaking distance of the Danes, there is only the river between us. But war by-and-by,—let us now talk of love. I have yours dated the 4th. With what joy I read it! I love you to adoration. I will do all that you wish, only forgive me if I cannot write you longer letters. Truly, on my honour, I have not the time, and since ten o'clock I have only had two hours' sleep. Love me always, no flirting, and leave Herrenhausen as soon as you can for Celle. Adieu."

"[BY THE ELBE], *August 17/27.*

"We are hard pressed here, and the truce is broken; it looks as though we shall bang away at one another to-morrow. Should anything happen to me I have given orders for your letters and portrait (which I have sealed in a packet) to be burned. I want to die less than ever, for your letter gives me hope and courage, it is so tender and unconstrained. I am delighted with it; it makes me

happier than the gods. I am more in love than ever. I have plenty of time to think of my passion, for I am patrolling day and night. You are always before my eyes; I think of you from the crown of your head to the tip of your toe. I reflect I am the only possessor of the jewel, which fell into my hands in so marvellous a way, and count myself the happiest man in the world. Should I die, if the good God has decreed my death, remember I die your true slave and faithful lover; and if one can go on loving in the other world, I vow that I will declare myself to you, and all the beauties of Paradise will never lure me from thee. Adieu."

"[BY THE ELBE], *August 20/30.*

"My letters are so short that I fear you may be angry; yet it is not through negligence, but the calls of duty. We have so few officers that I cannot get a moment's peace. It is now between ten and eleven o'clock at night, and at twelve o'clock we go on guard, which lasts till morning. From three to seven I sleep, and at seven Le Felton gives me work for half the day. Our plans here change every day! I cannot tell you what will happen. I had a talk with Buccow about many things. Among other things, I said your mother was rapidly wasting away. He contradicted me flatly, and swore he would wager three thousand crowns in solid silver against me. If he be right you will be happy. Buccow told me that when you were at Celle the Duchess bathed on the ramparts in the great vats that are there. Do please tell me if this is true, for he said you did the same."

"[FROM THE CAMP], *August 22/September 1.*

"*Enfant aimable*, how shall I find words to thank you

for your dear letter, filled with thousands of loving, tender, charming things! They touch me to the quick. I love you more than ever. I would not change my lot for the Ottoman Empire. Would to Heaven news of peace would come once for all! I would be at your knees, I would run to you, Beloved, I would bathe your feet with my tears, and die with joy at being united to the woman whose absence makes me pine to a shadow. But I fear such happiness will not come yet, for affairs here begin to drag. Marshal Podevils is suffering from a slight fever; I hope it will not last, or else I do not see much chance of getting away all the winter, if peace should not be made. The suspense is killing me. *Dieu!* what should I do? I would rather leave the service than stay here."

While negotiations were pending between the King of Denmark and the princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the Danish general took the law in his own hands, bombarded Ratzeburg, and destroyed the fortifications. It was urged that he misunderstood his orders and acted too soon; but there is little doubt this excuse was merely a diplomatic ruse; and, the ostensible *casus belli*—the fortifications of Ratzeburg—having been removed, the King of Denmark signified his willingness to make peace on his own terms. As the only alternative was invasion, which they were ill prepared to resist (and which later happened under the Duke of Lauenburg), the Duke of Celle and his brother had to put the best face they could on the matter, and the next two months were taken up in negotiations for the treaty. All this time the Hanoverian army was compelled to remain by the Elbe, and Königsmarck with it. Fever broke out among the troops, and Marshal Podevils, the commander-in-chief, was seized with it, and had to be taken to Lüneburg.

The Princess meanwhile had left Hanover for another visit to her parents at Celle, where doubtless she renewed her prayers for money. She could not have chosen a worse time, for the exchequer of Celle was very low, and she was met with stern refusal. This, joined to the desperate state of Königsmarck's affairs and the general hopelessness of the situation, preyed on her mind so much that she became seriously ill. When Königsmarck heard the news, his first thought was to get leave and go to her at Celle; but on reflection he saw the thing was impossible, as his presence was required at the camp. All this is made plain in the following letters:

“[FROM THE CAMP], *August 27/September 6.*

“At this very moment Bülow is crossing the Elbe with the news that Ratzeburg is bombarded; it is in ashes. His mission is to testify to their Highnesses that General Vaidel has bombarded the place a day sooner than he ought to have done, for the King gave him orders to wait till Monday, meaning all day Monday; but Vaidel, too delighted to open fire, began on Monday at six o'clock in the morning, and at noon the town was all in flames. When the King heard of it, he ran to cry a halt, for he had promised to do nothing before Wednesday. I let you know this because the King is sending a message by Bülow to express his regret and to make an offer of peace, on the basis of the last terms proposed on his side. So it now depends upon our masters whether there shall be peace or war. In the latter event I shall not see you for a long time, and you may be obliged to flee for safety to Berlin or Amsterdam.”

“[FROM THE CAMP], *August 28/September 7.*

“Danger is over for the present; and I do not exert

myself much, for there is no longer any prospect of advancement for me. So it seems you will probably see your lover safe and sound, unless the sickness all about should catch him. Do not therefore be any longer uneasy about me. The courier who went to Flanders was only sent to make the thing look more important. I firmly believe that they will not make the troops come back, for they are really talking about patching up this affair; rather a difficult task, but our side must make a virtue of necessity. That is how things stand.

"Your assurances of tenderness fill me with rapture; you say you would love me without arms or legs. Surely you wish me to give up the ghost altogether for very joy. You are my idol; I worship you, and my love will only end with my life. I am passionate, tender, faithful; my only joy is to think of your lovely eyes and the fire which darts from them—that sweet fire which burns my heart. But I cannot understand why you went to see La Platen before you left Hanover; for three years you have not been near her, and now you begin. I know you are very timid, but why should you go to see her? Sometimes we must worship the devil lest he should harm us."

"[FROM THE CAMP], *August 29.*

"I can see from your letter that you are ailing, for I found in it nothing to move me. I won't scold you, for I want to know if you are really very ill. Don't alarm me if it be not so, and I implore you, don't eat fruit,—there is nothing so bad for one; lots of people fall ill through that. Dysentery is raging everywhere. *Dieu!* if such a misfortune were to fall on me, I couldn't bear it. I am raging to know how you are. I wanted to leave my post and go to Celle; but then it would all have burst, and we should be ruined in reputation. Alas!

poor lover! do you consider your reputation when your beautiful one is ill? No, no! let me risk everything. If I do not hear to-morrow evening that you are better, expect me. I will fly to your side, and won't budge an inch until you are well. I beg your pardon, my beautiful one, for all I have ever said to wound you. Do not refuse forgiveness, I entreat you; take care of your health, my life; rest, and spare yourself. What shall I do if a great sickness seize you! I shudder when I think of it, and death looms before my eyes. If I could only be at the foot of your bed to take care of you, it would comfort me a little! But how can I manage it? Perhaps I should not see you at all, for you will be surrounded by your women if it be true you are really ill. Marshal Podevils has been carried off to Lüneburg, and that gives me more work; for though Bocage has the left wing, I have so much to do on the right wing that I haven't a moment to myself. I shall be glad to end this campaign without having anything to reproach myself with. Adieu. May the angels preserve you!"

Königsmarck to Fräulein von Knesebeck.

"You distress me by not giving me better news. Tell Her Highness not to trouble about writing to me. I absolutely refuse to allow her to write while she suffers so. How joyfully I would go to comfort her were it not for Marshal Podevils' illness! Besides, the truce ends to-day, and I have received orders to be on guard. You can imagine how that news grieves me. I am rewarded by the Duke of Celle, but not by the Elector, so I am raging. I vow, on my damnation, that were it not for my dearest love I would quit the Hanoverian service directly this business is over. I will write of this more to-morrow. I received Léonnisse's sweet messages

with joy. I pray God soon to give her better health. Embrace her tenderly from me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"ALTEMBURG, September 19/29.

"The joy I feel at knowing that you are out of danger is very great, and I pray Heaven you will soon lose your weakness. If it will only go away, I shall not mind if it leave you pale and thin and reduced to a shadow. My only wish is that you suffer no longer. I should be unhappy indeed were my love only inspired by your beauty, for in twenty-four hours, nay, even less, your loveliness might change to ugliness, and then where should I be? My love is founded on more solid qualities, and it will never change even when you are eighty years old. The beauty of person is but a passing thing, but the beauty of merit lasts for eternity. I am not a man to be in love with mere beauty; it often dazzles me, but never blinds me, for I have frequently noticed that where beauty is so great merit is very little. I vow to you still that I do not know when my love for you has made me easy for even a quarter of an hour; even now scarcely a night goes by but I sit up half the time fearing this and fearing that. I sometimes think if I had done right I should never have paid you my court, for I ought to have thought about the future and all the consequences that would follow upon our love. But then, *I knew you*, and I gave myself up to you. I could not listen to reason, but only to my heart. Too late I see all the obstacles in the way of our happiness, and I know you see them too. You have more to lose than I have, in the rank you are; but we cannot alter that, so, *ma chérie*, let us have pity on each other and hate the fate which makes us so unhappy. Do not think that I shall ever repent having

devoted myself to you. No, no! my divine Léonnisce; had I to begin all over again I should do the same thing. My passion carries me away. I cannot write so coldly as you did for four whole pages, but no doubt your weakness made your love seem weak. I will say what my true and sound heart dictates. In spite of all obstacles if only you will not waver, I will show you a constancy that will last till death. Ah! my dear, my dear! true heart wounds are incurable. All joy, all danger, make no difference. They only bring home to me that nothing is dearer than the love I bear for you; and the more dangers, the more difficulties there are to be overcome, the greater will be the victory. The conquest of the whole world is nothing to me compared with the conquest of your heart. When the time comes for us to be together always, we will sing, 'How delightful is this place! Let us taste its delights.' But when will that happy hour dawn? I am waiting for it with intense impatience. It is 'better late than never,'—a detestable proverb for loving hearts, but what would you?

"As the Prince has desired you to return to Hanover soon, it is no use your thinking of going to Epsdorff, or Göhre, but go straight to Hanover, I shall not be done here this month, and the month of November will bring back all our warriors, and as the Prince is one of them we must take advantage of the precious time. If it be true that you have such an aversion to the Prince, I pity you, for you will suffer even more than I do, and that is not a little. . . . The Prince is one of those monsters who devoured the ungrateful Andromeda. Would to Heaven I were Perseus to free you from him; but, alas! what can a mortal man do? . . . I am all yours, heart, soul, and body. Ah! if I could but kiss that little mouth whose sweetness I have so often tasted. My blood riots

when I think of it. For eight weeks I have been keeping Lent. I have not shaved since I left Hanover, I have been living like a monk, fasting on Sundays and not missing a sermon, and all for the sake of the sweetest little woman in the world, whom I love more than my two eyes—so tenderly that I cannot find words to express my feelings. My only joy is in gazing on and kissing your portrait as I lie on my bed, without taking my eyes and lips off it for two hours at a stretch. In those moments I must own that I am not a monk, for my passion carries me away. Adieu, adieu."

When the Princess had recovered from her illness she was sent back to Hanover, and her mother went with her. The Electoral Prince, George Louis, had now returned from the campaign in Flanders, and the Elector of Hanover and the Duke of Celle agreed that it would be better for him in the future to remain at home and see more of his wife and children. Even the Duchess of Celle urged her daughter to attach herself more to her husband. The affairs of the house of Brunswick-Lüneburg were not at their brightest; the trouble with the Danes was a heavy blow, and the campaign this year in Flanders had been attended with disaster all along the line. The French had captured Ghent, won the battles of Linden and Neerwinden, and besieged and taken Charleroy. The star of William and the Allies was certainly not in the ascendant, and the general depression made itself felt at Hanover and Celle. Under these circumstances it was all the more necessary for the families to pull together and show no disunion. The Princess was therefore bidden to return to Hanover and her wifely duty, and make the best she could of her lot—advice which could hardly have been more unpalat-

able. Her dismay was shared by Königsmarck, who, on receipt of the news, endeavoured to obtain leave from the camp and set out for Celle, where the Princess was. She had been delaying her departure on the pretext that she was not yet well enough to travel. Of Königsmarck's letters at this time we give the following:

“[FROM THE CAMP], *October 1.*

“Oh, cruel destiny! oh, endless misfortune! why wilt thou always distress me? Scarcely did I see the sun's rays than a cloud robbed them from my eyes. Only this fatal blow was needed. What! I may not even taste three or four days of bliss with you? Oh, my dear one! I ought to have worshipped you from afar, not loved you; Heaven punishes me for my audacity. You are happier than I, for you hope your mother will find a way out of your troubles; but I have no hope, and greatly fear your plans will not succeed. Alas! where am I to look for consolation? My charming divinity, let me bury myself in some lonely corner of the world, far away from the light, since all hope of passing my life with you is lost. I pity you, my angel; yet I suffer more, for I am the cause of your pain and sorrow. Take care that the Prince does not find any coldness in you, though that advice is greatly against my inclination. You must guard yourself against the danger that threatens you. I therefore advise you to cajole and flatter the man I wish you to hate; you must coax him without fail. The tears you are shedding are tears of blood to me. But for me you would be the happiest woman in the world; yet remember, I suffer no less than you. I thought by devoting myself wholly to you that I should be the happiest of men; but destiny has thwarted us. I have forsaken relatives, friends, countrymen, estates, and wealth

to have the joy of sometime tasting peacefully the delights of our mutual love; but, alas! I have lost all without gaining my desire.

"A certain friend of our Court told me that they think the treaty will soon be signed, but the Danes make so many quibbles that it is postponed from day to day. We shall still be here ten or twelve days, so the Prince will see you before me, and this cuts me to the heart. Count Platen's son came to see me yesterday, and brought me a letter from his mother, who is reckoned great among us here; I enclose it to you, so that I may have nothing to reproach myself with. My answer was only six lines, and as cavalier as courtesy permitted. When I have the happiness of seeing you, I will repeat it word for word. The young Count told me that the peace would be signed for certain on Tuesday, but as that is too long for me to wait, I must try to find some other means of seeing you at Celle before you go to Hanover. I don't know if I can manage it, but I shall know to-morrow. . . .

"*L'envoi*.—I am writing to ask Marshal Podevils to give me leave for three days. I shall be at Celle before you go away. Directly I know I will start at once. I will come disguised. Wait for me on the small staircase two nights running until twelve o'clock. I know the way to the hidden staircase at the back, and will wait for the signal if I reach there safely. Adieu."

Whether Königsmarck saw the Princess at Celle or not it is impossible to say. But this much is certain—he returned to Hanover from the campaign late in October, some weeks after the Princess's arrival there. The following letters (which bring this correspondence to an end) were all written between then and the close of the

year. The first is the most interesting, for it shows that the Princess had qualms of conscience about the double life she was leading, though she had not the strength to break from it. Her desire was to flee with Königsmarck to some far-off land, obtain a divorce from her husband, marry her lover, and live in what Count Schulenburg-Klosterode quaintly calls "an honourable married state." In other words, she wished paradoxically to get rid of the temptation by yielding to it. Königsmarck, on his part, was not backward in sophistries; he reminded her that their thoughts had always been directed towards matrimony, and, once united to the Princess, he vowed to lead a sober and cleanly life. Whether these good intentions would have been carried out it boots not to speculate; but one thing was now certain, Königsmarck could not remain in the service of the Elector of Hanover. He was still received at Court, but every movement was watched. His stolen meetings with the Princess were few and far between and attended with great risk. Often their appointments were not able to be kept, while the fact of a letter having been missing or a signal misunderstood was sufficient to throw them both into a fever of agitation. Yet he was still so unreasonable that, if the Princess treated him in public with necessary reserve, he reproached her passionately in private. Marshal Podevils warned him again, the Duchess of Celle warned her daughter, and the coldness of the Elector and Electress and the gossip of the whole Court must have been surely more than sufficient to point out the extreme danger of the path the lovers were treading. Yet they rushed on, not blindly, but with their eyes wide open, to the very edge of the precipice. Thus ended the year.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

“[HANOVER], *Thursday morning.*

“If your father be ruined you will have nothing left to hope for, but I believe the demands of the Danish envoys will not be so exorbitant as all that. You think that I no longer wish to see you; you must know I wish it more than ever, and it will not be good for us to be kept apart much longer—for many reasons, the chief being that should the Danes come into the country—God preserve us!—they might open all letters, and ours also. To avoid that possibility we should have to break off all communication, and without being able to see or write to you my life would not be worth living. So you think your love for me is a great sin, and you believe God punishes you for it. Great heavens! what a thought! Do not get such an idea in your head, for that kind of folly might lead you far from me. You know that our resolves, our inclinations, our wishes are in harmony with the divine laws, and it only depends on Him above to take us away from the life we lead. I vow to Him after that I will sin no more against the sixth commandment, and I will lead a pious life, free from reproach. Make Him also the same vows—perhaps He will hear our prayers. I am longing for that happy consummation, and with what joy I will repent of my sins! Your caresses, your love, your very presence will be all-sufficient to me.”

“[HANOVER], *Saturday.*

“Your letter gave me almost as great a fright as your mother gave to you. My careless valet brought it in to me saying aloud, ‘Sir, *Madame votre Maîtresse* sends you this letter, and wishes for an answer.’ Goritz, Weyke, and others were present. Without losing countenance I pretended to be angry, saying, ‘A man bothers

me.' They ask what he bothered me about. I said, 'He wants to sell me a horse worth nothing and he demands the money down.' So I got out of it this time, and I have given strict orders for it not to happen again. After my friends, who were all men, had gone away, I read your letter, and found great consolation in it. I was glad to find that scarcely a moment had passed after your arrival before you wrote to me. Why did you not rest first? Think of your health and then of your slave, for in taking care of yourself you are taking care of me. I am sure you will not refuse my prayer. Not Orpheus, nor Adonis, nor Jupiter himself will make me jealous this time. I trust your word. It is only our separation that tortures me now. I had a little touch of fever this afternoon, but nothing much.

"The Elector went to see La Platen last evening; you may imagine the good counsel they took together, but it doesn't matter to us. Let us always love one another, and let them do what they like. What do we care?"

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday, Two o'clock after midnight.*

"Your conduct is not very kind. You appoint a *rendezvous*, and then leave me to freeze to death in the cold, waiting for the signal. You must have known that I was there from 11:30 till 1, waiting in the street. I know not what to think, but I can hardly doubt your inconstancy after having such icy proofs of it. You did not deign to look at me all the evening, you purposely avoided playing cards with me, and you wanted to get rid of me. I will go away quickly enough. Farewell, then. I start to-morrow morning for Hamburg.

"[*The next morning*].

"Having spent the whole night without sleeping, I

have had time to think over my troubles. I determined to go, but then I remembered I once swore to you that I would never go away abruptly, and I want to know before I go the reason of your behaviour. That is why I am still here to-day. I shall not appear at Court, for I mortally hate it, and so you will not be able to give me the signal with your eyes; but the other way will let me know if I may come in. I am glad I did not continue my letter last night, for I was in so violent a rage that I should certainly have said some unpleasant things for which I should now be sorry."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"I was sure that you would be dissatisfied with me because I did not keep my appointment. I don't know if you think my reason a good one, but it was a very real one. . . .¹ But, I say, why did you let me wait the day before yesterday two hours in the street? and why do you not excuse yourself? Do you think I am not hurt by such treatment? Read my first letter, you will see the reasons why I thought you ought to have let me know. I did not cry out about it, but that did not prevent me being very much piqued. Your letter of yesterday charmed me: I will make a play of it, for, besides the wit, it is filled with natural and convincing tenderness. I can see it is my charming princess, my Sophie, who wrote it—adorable angel! I shed tears in reading your letter. Your lovely eyes have been bathed in tears, and I am the cause! Königsmarck, thou dost not deserve to possess Sophie's loving heart."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday*.

"My anxiety will not let me sleep. I go over everything in my mind, even my childhood; but I cannot find

¹ He was ill, but there is no need to quote his detailed description of his illness.

the letter I had from you last night nor remember where I put it. I burned one yesterday,—it might have been yours by mistake. Unfortunately the missing letter is the one in which you notified when and where I might see you. It was the last I had from you. I remember it well; I had it from La Confidente on Sunday morning, for yesterday morning she had one from me; but she did not write back, and that worries me. I did not find anything in my hat last night. You remember that you asked me what I was looking for. I answered: 'My hat; some one has stolen my gloves.' You replied: 'No doubt, for Count Horne, or Oxensterne, I don't remember which one it was, had a fringed pair of gloves stolen.' You see, I remember trifles. Do not imagine, then, I could have forgotten such a thing as an appointment with you. Would to Heaven I *had* forgotten, for I fear our carelessness will be our ruin. I swear to you that I looked in my hat, and, as to my gloves, I put them on, but there was nothing in them. I was angry with La Confidente, for she had given me the signal and yet I found nothing [in my hat]. I thought she had not had an opportunity. But I was much surprised on leaving the room to find nothing, for La Confidente had given me the signal a second time. I wanted to speak to her about it, but Prince Ernest followed me so closely, and Stutenfrich was next to me on the other side, that I could not do so. You will see from my letter of last night that I made no mistake; it was written as soon as I got home. If I had had one from you I should not have forgotten it in three hours' time, despite my poor memory. *Dieu ait pitié de nous, car sans son secours je ne sais comment nous sortirons de cette affaire.* I take Him as witness that I fear not the peril I run. But to lose you for ever, that is what distresses me!

"If I wished to go away from you, it was because I might be able to help you better at a distance than if I were near. They might imprison me perhaps, but that is a ridiculous thought; I will not dream of it. I was admiring you last evening, watching you laughing before that mirror in so merry a mood; yet all the time I was trembling, for I thought that the Elector and your mother were already talking about that letter, and were planning how to punish us. Your cheerfulness makes me suspect many things: sometimes I think you will not see me for a long time and little by little detach yourself from me. Other thoughts come into my head whereof I will not write to you. I am so troubled because of that accident that my brain is in a whirl. To crown it all, Madame Goritz has told me that she knows I hid *incognito* three days in the town without showing myself, and the people I employed in my intrigue had betrayed me, and a dozen things beside; it would take too long to write it all. This, added to the loss of your note, makes me beside myself. If among all my sorrows I had not the one of fearing that you might weary of me, I should console myself in spite of everything, but that thought finishes me. Should they begin to question La Confidente as to whether I have written to her sometimes, she must say at once that I wrote to her several times from Flanders, but not from here. My brother-in-law [Count Lewenhaupt] must be apprised of the same thing, so that we may not betray ourselves. It is necessary my brother-in-law should know what to answer in case he should be questioned, and know to whom the letters were addressed which my lacquey brought him. I shall say that when I went away I asked him to give the letters addressed to the 'Frole Crunbuglen' to a woman who would ask for them under that name, and he sent on

to me the answers the woman brought, without asking from whom the letters came. He must say neither more nor less. If I do not make my meaning clear, I must have a word with you, for it is wise to take precautions in time, lest we be discovered. You must deny ever having written me at all, but La Confidente must not deny that I have spoken about you in case they ask what I have written to her."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"What will you say, Madame, when you learn that they did not let me go through the day without the misfortune I dreaded? Marshal Podevils was the first to tell me to beware of my conduct, because he knew on good authority that I was watched. I pressed him to give me more particulars, saying I did not understand what he meant; but he would tell me nothing except that it was concerning a lady of the Court, and you can see to whom he refers. I was not satisfied, and implored him to tell me more positively in what way my conduct was wrong. He said he would do so to-morrow on condition I promised not to speak to any one about it. Prince Ernest has told me the same thing; and he is not quite as guarded as the other, for he admitted that the conversations I had from time to time with you might draw upon me very unpleasant and serious consequences. I could not wait any longer in the ante-chamber for fear of breaking down after hearing such news. Were you to see the state I am in you would pity me; my eyes, from which a torrent of tears has flowed, would show you how my heart is aching. O God! where am I to find a shelter to end my misery? O cruel Fate! scarcely hast thou let me taste the delights of love than thou plungest me into the most pitiable state ever known! From what I could gather from Prince Ernest, all that he knows is through

La Barbouilleur, and he, no doubt, will speak to me about it, but up to now he has avoided me. I shall know to-morrow: perhaps I shall suffer arrest and death. . . . Nothing has touched me to the quick so much as to find that our affair is in every one's mouth. I wouldn't mind the Electress of Brandenburg's knowing it, if only half the Court did not know it too. When am I to see you? When shall I gaze into those beautiful eyes? When will they beam on me and declare the joy it gives you to rest in my arms!"

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"For God's sake do not show me any coldness! I fancied that when you left the room you would not deign to look at me. How that seeming affront stung me! I am not the cause of what happened yesterday. You must blame the stars that rule our lives—you must blame them and not me, for I love and adore you, and think only, day and night, of how to please you. Behold my face, my conduct, my steps, my looks,—do you think I fail in the least trifle? do you notice any signs of weariness? Alas! far from that, I love you more than ever. My passion upsets my reason, and that is why I cannot conceal what I feel. Adorable one, I will love thee to the tomb! To-night thou shalt be mine—yea, though I perish."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday evening, 5 o'clock.*

"I do not know if I am to attribute the sadness in your eyes to your pious scruples or to the news of my departure. I flattered myself it was the latter during the game; but at supper the sad look vanished and you were as cheerful as ever. Perhaps your partner's conversation had something to do with it, for he seemed to put you in

good temper in a moment. Perhaps I do you wrong: and you restrained yourself so that no one should notice your grief; in that case I forgive you. I wanted to ask you yesterday to let me affect a cheerful look, but I could not do so. I beg you, don't let *La Confidente* make me signs when she has nothing to give me, or when she does not want to speak to me. I was anxious about her signals all night.

"I needed your letter to deliver me from profound grief. Everything depends on to-morrow's news. I feel like a criminal under sentence of death, who is to be executed on the morrow. Death would not grieve me more than to separate myself from you. I am more than grateful for your consent to see me; but I know that interview will break my heart, for I have to leave you amid many pleasures, in the midst of Court society, and surrounded by no end of handsome gallants.¹ The Electress will put opportunities in your way and you will not be able to avoid them.

"Until now I have always thought my passion was the cause of our differences, and I have blamed myself for acting in so jealous a manner; but, Madame, the quarrel we had yesterday evening shows me clearly you cannot live without quarrelling. From the most innocent thing in the world you magnify the greatest fault imaginable. When I am in the wrong and offend you, why are you not reasonable enough to say: 'I will not have you speaking to me in that way, and if it occur again we shall fall out.' I should then take care not to commit the same fault again. But no, you are always picking a quarrel with me. You know such ways distress me, and, added to the wicked affronts I suffer every day from all sides, they

¹ This probably referred to a visit Königsmarck was going to make to Hamburg.

crush me so that I do not know what keeps me from taking my leave. I shall certainly do so to-morrow, for it is evident you wish to make my life unbearable. Le Barbouilleur found a good deal of fault with you for talking so much to that violinist. Of course it was not seemly for a lady of your rank; but I am no longer in the state of mind to tell you what is seemly and what is not. I must think about beating a retreat, for the way you treat me is beyond bearing; I would rather lose my sight than be treated so. For mercy's sake, cannot you alter your ways for the sake of a lover who adores you tenderly? Think of all the trouble you have caused me, of all the risks I run, and if there be the least spark of love left in you, you will not let a heart perish on which your image is for ever graven."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"I am joyful to hear of your return (from Herrenhausen), and as my sickness is ended, if you will allow me to come to you and kiss your knees and ask your pardon for all my suspicions, I shall be overjoyed. I am punished enough for them, God knows; for I have been sick unto death with grief and rage, and I had no news of you. I will see you any day and hour you wish. Farewell."

CHAPTER XXII

THE GATHERING STORM

My star! a baleful one.

I see the black night, and hear the wolf.

What star?

TENNYSON, *Queen Mary*.

KÖNIGSMARCK went to Hamburg in January to see if he could raise money, but he failed, and returned to Hanover more embarrassed than before. At Hanover he had long outworn his welcome: the Court had no smiles for alien nobles when they were short of money, and Königsmarck was now a suspect and under a cloud.

Apart from the chronic difficulty with Sophie Dorothea, the Electoral family had its own worries. Prince Max was again troublesome, and the King of Denmark and Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel were secretly inciting him to rebel. The hatred of the last-named prince for the House of Hanover was now open and declared; and he was an exceedingly dangerous enemy, as his knowledge of the domestic discontent in the Elector's family gave him much opportunity of intrigue. Informed of everything at the Hanoverian Court, it is said that Duke Antony Ulrich made overtures to Sophie Dorothea to induce her to take part against the Electoral House, and she was not indisposed to listen, though she hesitated to commit herself until all hope of obtaining money for a separate establishment from her father was at an end.

Both Hanover and Wolfenbüttel were full of spies, employed by their respective princes against each other, and the Elector soon got knowledge of these intrigues. Prince Max was sent to Savoy, where he took command of a regiment of cavalry, his father allowing him thirteen thousand dollars instead of the six thousand he had previously granted him. But, as the English envoy shrewdly remarks, this was "only to get rid of him, for fear he should revolt again."¹ Prince Christian, who was also suspected, was sent into Hungary to take part in a campaign for the Emperor. Of the disaffected there remained only Sophie Dorothea, whose intrigue with Königsmarck, if the Elector had but known it, was the most dangerous of all. But as soon as Ernest Augustus had got rid of his insubordinate sons he fell ill, so ill that fears were entertained of his life; these family worries had probably told upon his health, for he was now advancing in years, and had always been a free liver. He was not nearly as robust as his elder brother, the Duke of Celle, whose temperate habits and love of hunting and outdoor pursuits gave him the enjoyment of vigorous health.

The Elector's serious illness brought many questions to the front which had hitherto lain in abeyance. Though there was every reason to believe the Electoral Prince would adhere in the main to his father's policy, yet the Elector's death, which now seemed within the range of practical politics, would of necessity bring about changes—none more momentous than the dethronement of Countess Platen from the position of power she had so long enjoyed. It would mean, also, the relegation of the

¹ Cresset's *Despatches*, Celle, March 20, 1694. Prince Max subsequently became a Roman Catholic and Jacobite, and died in open rebellion against his elder brother (George I.) in 1726.

Electress Sophia to the comparative obscurity of Electress-Dowager, and would, of course, involve the accession of Sophie Dorothea to the dignity of Electress. Sophie Dorothea did not covet the Electoral diadem, but it would be thrust upon her whether she would or no, and the mere fact of being Electress, though she had no influence with her husband, would of necessity give her added dignity and honour. She would become a force for her enemies to reckon with, especially as she had the Celle family influence at her back.

The prospect of Sophie Dorothea reigning at Hanover as Electress was not contemplated with equanimity either by the Electress Sophia or by the Countess Platen, though from different reasons. Countess Platen well understood that the new Electress would certainly not ignore her arrogance as the Electress Sophia had done, and she might even refuse to receive her at her Court. She therefore redoubled her efforts to involve the Princess in disgrace and ruin, and unfortunately the Königsmarck affair gave her a handle. There is nothing to show that the Electress Sophia took part in these tactics, for though she strongly disliked the idea of the daughter of the despised d'Olbreuse taking precedence of her, her line of policy had hitherto been to give Countess Platen a wide berth, and she was not likely to reverse it now.

The Princess cared nothing for affairs of State, and, absorbed as she was in her mad passion for Königsmarck, heedless alike of appearances and consequences, she thoughtlessly played into the hands of her enemies. Countess Platen was so far successful in her manœuvres that she managed to poison the mind of the Elector against his daughter-in-law, and she inflamed the Electoral Prince against his wife anew. The immediate result was that he put spies to watch Sophie Dorothea and

Königsmarck, and the Princess's position at Hanover became more intolerable than before. The lynx-eyed Knesebeck became aware of the danger, and implored the Princess either to give up the intrigue or to allow her to retire from her service. But the Princess refused to let her go, and Knesebeck, who was devotedly attached to her mistress, realising that if she abandoned her she would be without a friend, stayed on. She was aware of the constant efforts which the Princess was making to leave Hanover and obtain a residence in Celle territory from her father, and she probably thought if she remained she might save her mistress from desperate steps and follow her in an honourable retreat from Hanover.

But obstacles only seemed to heighten the Princess's passion. Since her return from Celle in the autumn she had not relaxed her efforts to obtain money from her parents; but the Duke of Celle had no funds to spare, crippled as he was by ruinous wars, nor was he in a mood to listen to the language of revolt. With her mother the Princess appears to have been more successful, for we find Cresset, the English envoy, writing to England about this time of "the desire of this Duchess [Celle] to pay thirty thousand or forty thousand crowns *à fond perdu* into our bank, if it be not filled or clogged up." In the light of the Princess's letters we may hazard a guess that the Duchess intended this sum to go towards her daughter's separate establishment, little dreaming, of course, that the separate establishment was but a blind, and she really wanted the money to fly with Königsmarck to some distant land.

Every thought and action of the Princess at this time was directed to one end only—flight, whither, when, and how she knew not. A hundred expedients flitted through her brain only to be dismissed, for one obstacle rendered

them all impossible lack of money; a prosaic reason to enter into the romance of princely personages, but nevertheless a real one. The Princess did not want much money, but some she must have—enough to enable her to live in decent independence. It seemed to her, that when she had taken her flight to some far-off country, the Court of Hanover would be only too glad to be rid of her, a divorce would inevitably follow, and she would then be allowed to marry Königsmarck and to spend the rest of her life quietly with him. That she would have found either happiness or peace may be doubted, but she was willing to take the risk. She was willing to abandon her high position and rank, the pomp and glitter of Courts, a brilliant prospect of crowns and kingdoms, for obscurity, dishonour, and comparative poverty. Whatever view we may take of her ethical standard, we cannot doubt the depth and sincerity of her one great love passion, all the greater because of the unworthiness of the man for whom she counted it joy to sacrifice all she had in the world.

Königsmarck, in his letters and interviews, now as before, was constantly inciting the Princess to revolt, and his alternate temptations and reproaches drove her nearly beside herself. In truth Königsmarck was himself in a tight place. Even Marshal Podevils, his staunchest friend, turned against him; and when he remonstrated with the Field-marshal about his lack of promotion and threatened to quit the Hanoverian service, Podevils curtly replied that he would put no obstacle in his way. Undoubtedly the most dignified course for Königsmarck to have taken would have been to have acted on this hint and have resigned his commission in a service where he was so unwelcome.

At this juncture the Countess Platen, who knew how

hard pressed he was, but who retained a liking for him, sought anew to tempt him from his allegiance to the Princess, and with shameless effrontery offered him her daughter in marriage, promising him in return the favour of the Elector, rapid promotion in the army, and her powerful support. She knew full well that his embarrassments, though acute just now, were only temporary, and thus she would not only secure an eligible *parti* for her daughter, but would win him over to her own interests.

To his credit, be it said, Königsmarck resisted the temptress, and rejected her offer with scorn and indignation. He went so far as to remind the Countess Platen that there were certain reasons why he should not marry her daughter.¹ These scruples the Countess Platen neither understood nor sympathised with; indeed, she strongly resented them, and she and Königsmarck parted in bitter anger. "A slighted woman knows no bounds," and she soon made her quondam lover feel the weight of her displeasure. A rumour ran round the Court that Königsmarck would be arrested on the ground that he had not

¹ This lady, Charlotte Sophia, the young Countess Platen referred to once or twice in the correspondence, was said to be the daughter of Countess Platen by the Elector of Hanover. She married, later, Baron Kielmansegge, Master of the Horse. On the death of her husband, George I. raised her to the rank of Countess of Darlington, and lodged her in St. James' Palace. It was generally supposed that she was his mistress. Her "niece," Charlotte, was married to Lord Howe, but people said she was the illegitimate daughter of the Countess of Darlington by George I. "The King," says Walpole, "was indisputably her father, and the first child born of this union was named George, after the King." But it may not have been true, since Lady Darlington was probably his half-sister. But it is impossible to say, for in the confused state of morals at this period no wonder that relationships occasionally became mixed.

paid his gambling debts in Flanders and thereby brought discredit to the Hanoverian army.

At this moment, just when Königsmarck's affairs were at their blackest, a door of escape was opened to him by the sudden accession of his friend Duke Frederick Augustus to the Electorate of Saxony. Duke Frederick Augustus succeeded his brother, the Elector George Frederick, whose death was sudden and tragic. The young Elector George, who was weak and dissolute, was entirely under the sway of a beautiful brunette of twenty, whom he created the Countess von Röhlitz. During her brief reign the favourite ruled Dresden with a rod of iron, and drove the Electress from the Court. Early in April, 1694, she died suddenly of small-pox, and the Elector, who would not leave her bedside, caught the fell disease and died eleven days later. Stepney, the English envoy at Dresden, thus writes in his quaint way:

"The revolution we have had here is so sudden and so extraordinary and so surprising that I know of no romance or tragedy to compare to it except *All for Love*. A virtuous Electrice has been slighted like Octavia, yet supported her disgrace with a patience and constancy equall to y^e Roman Ladyes. An Elector has revelled in pleasures with an Imperious Mistress (who pretended to be a wife), and defyed y^e open Scandall of Adultery and double Marriage; till y^e Scene changed, and y^e fond Pair were carried off y^e Stage one after y^e other (like Anthony and Cleopatra) in less than a month. Our Saxon-Lady was dressed up in as much State after her death as y^e Egyptian Queen was before she applyed y^e Aspicks, and was buryed in a Mausoleum where lay three Princes of y^e Electorall family, but has had little rest there; For y^e rage of y^e new Government has rifled her coffin of all her ornaments and has transported y^e

Corps naked to a churchyard where lye none but Male-factors and those who dye of pestilential distempers. The Mother for having had a handsome daughter is prosecuted as a Witch; as if Beauty without Philters were not charm enough to make a Prince of 26 Love passionately as y^e Elector did, and all families here who have either Allyances or friendship with these poor Ladyes are either crushed or shaken by the Fall, as is usuall in mighty ruines.”¹

Truly a revolution—transformation, rather! Youth, beauty, vice, insolent in their power, and suddenly King Death waves his wand and they are swept from the stage and become as though they had never been. What an opportunity for the moralist! It may be feared, however, that the moral was lost on the royal brother Augustus who succeeded thus unexpectedly; and so far as morals went the Court of Dresden lost rather than gained by the exchange. Augustus II., better known in history as Augustus the Strong, the modern Sardapalus, “the Saxon man of sin,” as Carlyle calls him, scandalised and dazzled Europe for nigh on half a century with his vices. The Elector George was weak, the besotted lover of one imperious mistress, who ruled him wholly. The Elector Augustus was physically strong, and ruled by nothing save his despotic will and his unbridled lusts. The number of his mistresses bid fair to rival those of Solomon, but no one of them ruled him, for he devoted himself to none. “Constancy is not in his nature,” writes Stepney, “and he may be called in y^e liberall sense a father of his people, as good King Charles was, for he is an impartial distributor of his bounty, and while he is in y^e humour, the first woman

¹ Stepney's *Despatches*, Dresden, May 18/28, 1694, State Paper Office, “Foreign Papers,” Germany.

y^t offers is sure of his caresses." ¹ This was written in no spirit of exaggeration. Augustus was "father of his people," indeed, for his Court formed a seraglio, and when he died he had no less than three hundred and fifty-four children by his numerous mistresses. Yet there was a certain splendour about the Saxon Elector. Like Augustus of Rome, he found a city of brick and left a city of marble. During his reign Dresden became one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. He established noble picture-galleries and museums full of objects of art, metal work, armoury, precious stones, porcelain, and glass. Great though were his vices, wanton though his extravagances, his love of the fine arts redeemed him from utter grossness. His reign indeed recalled the declining days of Imperial Rome, when the most exquisite polish and the grossest licentiousness flourished side by side. Reckless, selfish, ambitious, luxurious, and despotic, the career of Augustus the Strong affords few parallels since the days of the Caesars.

Such was the Prince whose sudden advent to power was hailed by Königsmarck as a means of deliverance from his troubles. He had written of him long ago to the Princess: "He is a good sort of Prince; I wish he would become Elector." ² His wishes were now gratified, and on receipt of the news he posted off to Dresden without delay.

The truth of the familiar Scripture, "Put not your trust in princes," must surely have been proved by Königsmarck more than once in his adventurous career. Yet there were several reasons why he should be inclined to put his trust in this particular prince: they were old friends and boon companions; they had travelled about

¹ Stepney's *Despatches*, Dresden, May 29 / June 8, 1694.

² Letter of Königsmarck to the Princess, p. 286.

Europe together in 1687 they had fought together, drank together, and gambled together during the campaign in Flanders in 1692, when Duke Frederick Augustus levanted, leaving behind him a pile of unpaid gambling debts, and his boon companions cursing him, as well they might. Of them Königsmarck was one of the heaviest creditors, for the Saxon Prince owed him no less than thirty thousand crowns. While he was only Duke Frederick Augustus, with extravagant habits and no power, to redeem the debt seemed hopeless, but it was quite another thing now that he had become Elector. So Königsmarck argued, and the present state of his affairs lending him wings, he set off for Dresden in almost indecent haste, lest other claimants should be in the field before him. He had interest, too, at his back, for without that interest his claim would have been little worth. The new Elector Augustus had long been captivated by Königsmarck's beautiful sister Aurora, and though up to this date she does not seem to have yielded to his solicitations, yet undoubtedly she stood high in his wayward favour.

Königsmarck arrived at Dresden within a week of the Elector George's death. Notwithstanding the nature of his errand, which could hardly have been quite agreeable to the new Elector, he was favourably received, and his petition listened to very graciously. Augustus had not forgotten—not at all; he never forgot a debt of honour, but it was a little inconvenient for him just then to find so much ready money. He was barely settled on his Electoral throne, and heavy expenses consequent on funeral rites and coronation festivities had to be borne; but he would give Königsmarck the post of major-general in the Saxon army in payment of the debt. This was hardly what Königsmarck expected or desired: his wish

was a large sum of ready money. But the offer was better than nothing; the post was one of dignity, the pay was large, and the rank and perquisites considerable. The favour of the Elector was an earnest of better things to come (which indeed were hinted at), so he accepted it with all the grace he could.

It is not easy to see how Königsmarck could have accepted this post as major-general in the Saxon army, as he undoubtedly did, consistently with the fact that he held at the same time the post of colonel in the Hanoverian army¹ and with his promise to the Princess to fly with her at the first opportunity to some far off corner of the world. But perhaps in this, too, he looked to the favour of the Elector.

Königsmarck's business having been settled, his thoughts lightly turned to pleasure, and the Court of Dresden afforded ample opportunities. Augustus the Strong did not greatly mourn his departed brother, who indeed left few to mourn him; and after he had gratified his love of display by giving him a gorgeous funeral, he turned his attention to the ceremonies and festivities of his own coronation, and he found time to inaugurate the round of revelry, feasts, and entertainments which lasted throughout his reign. To these entertainments Königsmarck was bidden as a welcome guest, and the new major-general proved his mettle, as was meet for one so distinguished in love and war and so celebrated in his adventures. Nor was he merely a welcome guest at

¹ Many chroniclers have puzzled their heads to reconcile these two facts, but the question is absolutely set at rest by the despatches of Stepney, which are now published for the first time in this book. They will be quoted later, and show quite clearly that Königsmarck was major-general in the Saxon army at the same time that he was a colonel in the Hanoverian service.

the table of the Elector. From the English envoy's (Stepney's) correspondence at this period it appears that he was well received in Dresden as the favoured guest of many nobles, and he himself entertained him, as he "had known him in England, Hamburg, Flanders and elsewhere." True he states that he had "no great opinion of y^e sparke," but that was after his fall, and no one has a great opinion of the fallen.

Feasting and riotous living seem hardly fitting for a disconsolate lover such as Königsmarck avowed himself to be, whose one desire was to find some "corner of the world" where he might live with the object of his love, and forego all honour and pleasure for her dear sake. But few men are quite consistent, and Königsmarck was not among them. While the Princess was eating her heart out in the palace at Hanover, weeping and wailing, quarrelling with her husband, importuning her parents, moving Heaven and earth to advance her pet scheme, Königsmarck was revelling in the wanton halls of Augustus the Strong. It is a sad fact, but there is no denying it, for this is a true history. His conduct was far from that of an ideal lover. If he had kept to eating and drinking and high play, it would have mattered little, but unfortunately the wine-cup loosens the tongue, and the brilliant Königsmarck, known to all Europe for his wit and amours, must needs maintain his reputation at Dresden by boasting of his conquests at the Court of Hanover. Nothing interested the different Courts of Germany so much as the vices and scandals of their neighbours, and the Court of Hanover afforded a rare opportunity. Königsmarck was more than ready to gratify their curiosity about it. Countess Platen, Madame Weyke, Madame Podevils, Fräulein Schulenburg, the Elector and the Electoral Prince all furnished matter

for sundry spicy tales, Countess Platen most of all. How Countess Platen bathed in milk and then gave it away as a dole to the poor of Hanover, how she painted her face, how she domineered over the Elector, and how she made overtures to Königsmarck, offering him her daughter, and his reasons for refusing—all this and much more he babbled in his cups, and all was duly reported and exaggerated, if exaggeration were possible, to the Court of Hanover by informers at Dresden.

The rage of Countess Platen and the other ladies may be better imagined than described. Whether Königsmarck went further, as his enemies alleged, and to his lasting dishonour boasted of his intrigue with the Electoral Princess, there exists no evidence to show. From Stepney's despatches it would appear that he did not, for that worthy later mentions the Princess's name in connexion with Königsmarck with surprise. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the same charge had been brought against Königsmarck before, and he had denied it so far as the Princess was concerned, though he admitted it in the case of Countess Platen and others. His denial counts for little, for he was probably too much intoxicated to remember what he said and what he did not say. We must not judge him too harshly for his free drinking, for it was in those days the custom of Courts, and there was never a festive gathering but that the majority became more or less intoxicated. But the fact that he was a wine-bibber undoubtedly detracts from the value of his denial. Be this as it may, there is no doubt whatever that Königsmarck's gossip at Dresden was repeated at Hanover to the people about whom he talked, and they were incensed beyond measure. This did not only apply to Countess Platen and the Elector Ernest Augustus, but to Fräulein Schulenburg and the

Electoral Prince. Ermengarda Melusina Schulenburg, to her credit be it said, never mixed herself up in Court quarrels, nor sought to thrust herself upon the Electoral Princess; she was of a peaceable disposition, and this no doubt was the secret of her lasting hold on George's affections. But even Ermengarda Melusina had her foibles; she was avaricious (perhaps wisely so, for she knew that the favour of princes was fickle), and she was not without her share of vanity. To hear that her grasping propensities had been publicly derided and her charms decried at the Court of Dresden by that loose fish Königsmarck was more than she could bear, and her tears of rage and vexation made the Electoral Prince more bitter towards his wife's lover and more incensed with his wife. So altogether Königsmarck had a pretty tempest brewing against his return to Hanover.

Meanwhile the unhappy Princess, railing more than ever against her Hanoverian surroundings, was counting the days for her lover's return in her dull apartments in the old Leine Schloss, and seeking a pretext which would serve to carry out her scheme of separation from her husband. It was not long in coming. The sullen and silent Electoral Prince as a rule avoided meeting his consort save in public; but one day, provoked by the tears of Schulenburg and the tales from Dresden, he burst into Sophie Dorothea's apartments without ceremony, and upbraided her coarsely for her favours to Königsmarck, telling her that she was the byword of the Saxon Court. The Princess, who hated her husband with a loathing which passes words to describe, was not slow to defend herself. Her ancient grievance against Schulenburg lent a barbed tip to her tongue, and with passion she retorted that it was not she, but her husband and his scarecrow mistress who were the laughing stock

of the Courts of Europe. She went on to say that the one thing she desired was a divorce, to which the Prince retorted that he would be only too glad to grant it to her, and would enter into any plan to bring it about. Bitter recriminations followed, and the quarrel grew fiercer, until at last, goaded beyond control by some taunt levelled at his mistress, George Louis sprang at his wife, and, seizing her by the throat, threatened to strangle her. The shrieks of the Princess brought Knesebeck and other attendants rushing into the chamber, and then the Prince relaxed his hold on his half-fainting wife, and threw her from him, crying with an oath that he would never see her again. As soon as she recovered, the Princess, still smarting under this brutal insult, without asking leave of the Elector, as she ought to have done, set out for Celle immediately, announcing, to all who cared to listen, her intention of seeking her parents' protection and of never returning to Hanover. So far as her husband was concerned she declared that the breach was irreparable, as indeed it proved to be.

Travelling nearly all night, the Princess arrived at Celle early in the morning and threw herself at her astonished parents' feet. To them she told her pitiful story, pointing to the marks of violence which she bore on her body and entreating their aid and shelter. The Duchess of Celle, who loved her daughter beyond all things, took her part warmly, and declared that nothing should part them again; but the Duke, influenced by Bernstorff, refused to listen to his daughter rebuked her for her insubordination, and bade her roughly to return to Hanover and her duty. He had no sympathy with her grievance against Schulenburg, and he bade her take as an example of wifely duty her excellent mother-in-law, the Electress Sophia, who never raised

difficulties of this kind. No doubt he thought the graceless Königsmarck was at the bottom of it all. In truth, the Duke of Celle could ill afford a rupture with Hanover just then. His brother had stood by him bravely throughout the war with the Danes, which was far more his quarrel than the Elector's. The danger was not yet over, for the Danes were still threatening to invade his territory, and their demands for indemnity had reduced his exchequer to its lowest ebb. Thus there were reasons of State as well as of domestic policy for his insisting on his daughter's return, and if he could have had his way he would have packed her back to Hanover the same day. But a man, even though he be a duke and a father, is apt to reckon without his host where women are concerned, for, finding tears and prayers unavailing, Sophie Dorothea promptly relapsed into violent hysterics. Her mother declared her quite unfit to travel, and in this opinion she was duly seconded by the Court physician who feared the strain on the Princess's reason.

There is little doubt that Sophie Dorothea was really ill—worn out by anxiety and grief; and this, added to her husband's brutality, and her father's repulse, reduced her to a state of nervous prostration from which she took some weeks to recover. The old Duke, who really loved his daughter after his fashion, though incensed at her conduct (and it must be admitted she was a troublesome daughter), was moved by her illness and distress, and, when he had posted a despatch to Hanover he gave her leave to remain with her mother for a time, premising that she must return to Hanover and her duty as soon as she was able to travel. He could grant her this favour the more easily, as the Elector and Electress were setting out for Wiesbaden for a cure, and the Court

would be away from Hanover for the time being. So Sophie Dorothea stayed on with her mother at Celle in absolute retirement, seeing no one, her health being still delicate, and when the Court moved to Brockhausen she went there too with her parents.¹ Whenever she had had an opportunity she renewed her entreaties to her father to give her a separate establishment, but he sternly refused.

Smarting under her disappointment, the Princess wrote the letters to her lover, complaining bitterly of her father's harshness, which afterwards told so heavily against her, and alienated the only powerful friend she had in the world.

The Princess went to Celle at the end of April, soon after Königsmarck's departure for Dresden; she remained there and at Brockhausen all through May, and it was not until the middle of June that the Duke of Celle insisted on sending her back to Hanover. The Elector and Electress had now returned from Wiesbaden, and had signified their willingness to welcome back their errant daughter-in-law; moreover, the Electoral Prince, who had incurred his share of blame for bringing about this family scandal, had gone to Berlin on a visit to his sister, the Electress of Brandenburg. It was thought advisable that he should absent himself for a time from his wife, and meanwhile the parents hoped to patch up again the outward semblance of a reconciliation between the ill-mated pair, as they had often done before. The Princess would therefore not have to face the ordeal of meeting her husband immediately on her return to Hanover, and as she was now better, the Duke of Celle insisted that she should go back, as her absence for so long a time was creating a scandal. In vain the Prin-

¹ Cresset's *Despatches*, Celle.

cess wept and prayed. The Duke, prompted by Bernstorff, bade her roughly go back to her duty. It is possible that had he temporized, or held out hope of granting her request, the catastrophe which afterwards wrecked the happiness of his daughter might have been averted. But the Duke was nothing of a diplomatist; he was simply a headstrong old man, and unfortunately the Princess had inherited from him a similar temperament. Thus, driven to bay, she lost her temper and threatened desperate courses. Words passed between her and her father which were never forgotten nor quite forgiven. In vain the Duchess of Celle tried to make peace, but between two such headstrong natures her words were only oil to the flames. There was nothing for the Princess to do but to return to the place she had left two months before vowing she would never see it again. This meant the triumph of the Platen faction and the public humiliation of the Princess. To her proud spirit it was worse than death.

Thus thrust from her father's gates, Sophie Dorothea set out on her return journey, her heart full of anger and revolt. A message had been sent to Celle that the Elector and Electress would be happy to receive her at Herrenhausen, where they were now staying. The road from Celle ran past the gates of Herrenhausen, which was situated about a mile from Hanover. It was expected and required by the rigid etiquette of German Courts that the Princess on her return should call and pay her respects to the head of the family (appearances must be kept up at all hazard); and advised from Celle of the day and hour she would return, the Elector and Electress and their Court assembled to receive her with due formality. The courtiers, who knew all the circumstances of the case, were on the tiptoe of expectation to

see how the Princess would demean herself. Countess Platen, more eager than the rest, and anxious to triumph over her fallen foe, craned her head out of the window to see if the Princess were coming, just as she and her sister, Madame Weyke, had done once before, when Sophie Dorothea made her first entry into Hanover as a bride on the occasion of her ill-omened marriage. The Princess's carriage was heard approaching, the outriders were already visible, the gates of Herrenhausen were thrown open, when to every one's astonishment the Princess leant forward and, without stopping the carriage, bade the coachman drive as fast as he could past Herrenhausen into Hanover.

The astonishment of the courtiers, and the indignation of the Elector and Electress at seeing themselves thus publicly flouted, knew no bounds. One must understand the rigidity of German Court etiquette at that period to appreciate the enormity of the Princess's offence; it was not merely an act of discourtesy, but one of revolt. It is impossible not to sympathise with the spirit which dictated this act, for even if there had been no other reason, the presence of Countess Platen was sufficient to justify it.

Arrived at Hanover, the Princess went at once to her apartments in the Leine Schloss, and there, attended only by the faithful Knesebeck, who followed her mistress still, albeit with fear and trembling, she gave out that she was ill, and steadily refused to see any one. Her conduct was at once reported to Celle, and those in authority were at a loss to know what to do. The situation was one which certainly could not be maintained for long, and the excuse that the Princess made was seized upon to deceive the world, and a polite fiction was circulated to the effect that the Princess's health had

broken down during the journey to Hanover, and she would shortly return and join her parents at Wienhausen. We cannot but admire the decorum with which these German princes tried to hush up their family scandals. Ill the Princess undoubtedly was, but it was an illness of the mind rather than of the body. She was sick unto death of Hanover and its surroundings, and, all the time when she was refusing to see any one, she was maturing a desperate plan of flight.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MURDER OF KÖNIGSMARCK

How do men die? But I so trapped alive—
O, I shall die a dog's death, and no man's.

SWINBURNE.

A DAY or two after the Princess returned to Hanover Königsmarck came back from Dresden. He had been kept informed of her movements, and, as her affairs grew more desperate, the question of flight was freely discussed in their letters. Königsmarck at first advised the Princess to fly to France, change her religion, and throw herself on the protection of the French King. France was her mother's country, and the Duchess of Celle was known to be friendly towards France, and even suspected of leaning to Popery. The Princess, too, through Balati, the French envoy, had exchanged compliments with Louis XIV., and had distinctly favoured the French party in opposition to her husband, who always upheld William and the Alliance. In the days gone by, when the Duchess of Celle and her daughter were supposed to have some influence, they had received many valuable jewels from the French King. A change of religion would effectually exclude the Princess from the Court of Hanover, now deeply pledged on the Protestant side, and constitute a claim on the munificence of Louis, who liberally pensioned distinguished converts, such as, for instance, the late Duke John Frederick of Hanover and King James of England. There was no

reason why he should not pension the Princess as well, as she would certainly be a thorn in the side of his adversaries. Königsmarck, too, was favourably known at the Court of Versailles, and were he to enter the French service he might hope for promotion and a career with honour.

Undoubtedly there was a good deal to be said in favour of the Princess's flight to France, but there was also much against it. Such a step would cut off Sophie Dorothea irrevocably from the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg—not only from Hanover, which she ardently desired, but from Celle, which she did not desire, and from all future favours from her father. The Duke of Celle all his life long had been the stoutest opponent of France, and for his daughter to go over to his enemies would be unpardonable treason; it would mean disinheritance without hope of reinstatement. The Princess, too, though not a deeply religious woman, was attached to the faith in which she had been brought up, and had no wish to change it, and without a change of religion there was no hope for her in France. Moreover, Elizabeth Charlotte, the Duchess d'Orleans, who was the devoted niece and correspondent of the Electress Sophia, occupied a prominent position at the French Court. She hated the Duchess of Celle and the Electoral Princess, and would undoubtedly do everything in her power to make things unpleasant for Sophie Dorothea. Lastly, and this obstacle was insuperable, the Princess had not enough money to fly to France and to maintain herself there for any time; it was a long way, and she ran considerable risk of being overtaken. So she dismissed the French plan, and turned her thoughts to one far more practicable—flight to Wolfenbüttel.

Here the ground was well prepared. Knesebeck had a

married sister in Brunswick, one Frau von Maitsch, to whom many letters were sent at this time, and who doubtless acted as an agent between the Princess and Duke Antony Ulrich. The strained relations between the Princess and the Electoral Court were well known to Antony Ulrich. She was his cousin; he had known her from childhood; she was nearly being allied to his house by the closest ties, and he was her mother's earliest friend. In this, her hour of trial, he communicated to her his sympathy and assured her of his support, more especially as he saw in these family dissensions something which might be turned to his advantage and could not fail to humiliate the Elector. The union of Hanover and Celle had been a hard blow to him, and anything which tended to disunion was in his favour.

Finding every other means of escape from a position which had become intolerable cut off, the Princess resolved to fly to Wolfenbüttel, and place herself under the protection of her cousin and old friend. The journey was short and inexpensive, and her escape from Hanover to Wolfenbüttel would not be as irrevocable as flight to France; it would not involve a change of religion, or make an unbridgeable gulf between herself and father, for Wolfenbüttel's quarrel was not so much with Celle as with Hanover. Once there, Duke Antony Ulrich would be sure to plead in her favour, and would certainly not give her up to the tender mercies of the Hanoverian Court. It would be better for Königsmarck too, for Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was allied with Denmark and Sweden, and Königsmarck, a Swedish subject, had only to throw in his lot with his King to be received back into favour. Of course, from the point of view of the Hanoverian government, the Princess's flight to Wolfenbüttel would be a treason even worse than flight to France, for

all relations between the two Courts had long since been broken off and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was a declared enemy of the Electoral House. Putting Königsmarck out of the question altogether, the Princess's policy was unpardonable in the eyes of the Hanoverian government: she first revolted and then plotted treason.

Unfortunately for the best interests of the Princess, Königsmarck *was* a factor in the situation. He had come back to Hanover almost simultaneously with the Princess,—an audacious act in itself, for he was in disgrace at Court on account of her. Ostensibly he had returned to attend to some necessary business; in reality he came back for the one and only purpose of aiding the Princess in her flight to Wolfenbüttel. He still held the post of colonel in the Hanoverian Guards, and it was necessary that he should resign it formally, since he had accepted a commission in the Saxon service. But, during the few days which elapsed between his return to Hanover and July 1, he took no steps to resign his commission, nor did he show himself in public. He went straight to his house and lived there in retirement, occupying himself mainly with arranging his affairs and sorting his papers. The Princess was also in retirement in her apartments at the Palace, still insubordinate, and refusing to see any one on the plea of illness. She, too, was very busy in much the same way. Communications passed between the lovers during these few days, but they were not able to arrange a meeting. The situation was dangerous, far more so than they seemed to realise. It is true that they knew they were watched, but they hoped to evade the spies as they had often done before. But then it had been convenient for their enemies to turn a blind eye to the intrigue; now they were on the alert. Every movement was observed and reported to headquarters.

Königsmarck was watched day and night, the Princess also; and had they reflected they must have seen the danger they were running. The imprudence and recklessness of their proceedings seem almost incredible; they rushed right on to their doom. As the Princess had settled on flight, it would have been wise for her to have dissembled a little; but she and Königsmarck provoked suspicion—she by her rebellion and threats of desperate proceedings, and he by returning to Hanover. There was really no need for him to have come back at all. He could have met the Princess at Wolfenbüttel, and she could have travelled there alone almost as easily as she made the journey to Celle. But despite every warning and the dictates of common prudence, Königsmarck came back into the very hands of his enemies, who were only seeking an opportunity to destroy him.

The opportunity was not long in coming.

On the evening of Sunday, July 1, 1694, Königsmarck received a note from the Princess, written in a feigned hand,¹ asking him to come to her that night without fail, and appointing the hour and mentioning the signal. In obedience to this summons, long expected, the same night, between ten and eleven o'clock, he stole out of his house and made his way towards the Leine Schloss. It afterwards transpired that his servants noticed him leave

¹ The Princess asserted later that this note was not hers at all; it was a forgery written by the Countess Platen as a snare, and she was greatly surprised when Königsmarck appeared and showed her the note. She gave it back to him saying that she had not written it. Knesebeck, on the other hand, in her statement asserts that the Princess had appointed to meet Königsmarck. It is therefore impossible to credit the poor Princess's denial, which was natural enough under the circumstances, but cannot be believed. If she had not expected Königsmarck, how came he to be admitted to her chamber at that hour of the night?

the house; they had also observed during the day that he was restless and disturbed. But he thought he was unobserved, and, as usual on the occasions of these stolen meetings with the Princess, he adopted what was practically a disguise. He wore a pair of shabby old summer trousers, a much-worn white jacket, very short, and a brown cloak. There is a conflict of testimony as to whether he was armed or unarmed; but the burden of the evidence goes to prove that he was girt with a short sword, which was part of the ordinary equipment, but for practical purposes he was unarmed. Why should he be armed? He had had many stolen interviews with the Princess before, and had come to no hurt.

Arrived at the Leine Schloss, Königsmarck went round to the wing where the Princess's apartments were situated and gave the signal, whistling [probably] a few bars of a well-known air. The signal was replied to [probably] by a light in the window, and a minute later he was admitted through the postern by Knesebeck and conducted to the Princess's chamber. Here La Confidente withdrew and the lovers were left alone. They had not seen each other for more than three months, and now they met under the shadow of great peril. We may imagine their meeting—the Princess's tearful reproaches anent her lover's conduct at Dresden, his fervent denials, and her sweet forgiveness; the tears, the vows, and the broken words. But they had other things before them than loving words and rapturous embraces; the time was short and there was much to say and much to do concerning the flight they had planned for the morrow. Both were agreed that the situation was intolerable, and could last no longer; both were ready to make the fatal plunge and brave the consequences. There could hardly be a more favourable time than the pres-

ent, so it seemed to them: the Electoral Prince was at Berlin, the Electress at Herrenhausen; there was no one of all the Hanoverian Royal Family in Hanover but the old Elector, weak and ailing, in a far off wing of the palace; time and circumstances alike were favourable for flight.

But they had forgotten one whose hatred, like her vengeance, never slumbered. Countess Platen, enraged against Königsmarck by his scandalous gossip about her at Dresden, had lost for the time the *tendresse* for him which had hitherto held her back from extreme measures. The Princess she detested and despised, and would have killed her rather than see her triumphant in Königsmarck's affections. The return of Königsmarck from Dresden, combined with the Princess's sudden revolt against all authority, made her suspicious that something unusual was going on, and for the last week she had doubled her spies, and every movement of both had been reported to her. No sooner, therefore, had Königsmarck let himself out of his house that night and stolen away disguised under cover of the darkness, than he was tracked to the palace and seen to enter the Princess's apartments. The quarry was run to earth at last. Information was at once given to Countess Platen, who in hot haste, regardless alike of the hour and place, repaired to the Elector's apartments, and told him, with much agitation and many gestures, that Königsmarck was even now in the chamber of the Electoral Princess, and she besought him to take immediate steps to arrest and punish the offenders.

The picture of Countess Platen posing as a champion of outraged virtue might have afforded the cynical old Elector some amusement under other circumstances, but this came too near home. Though of easy morality, and

by no means inclined to be hard on offences of this nature, the audacity of Königsmarck enraged him beyond measure. He was already angry with the Princess because she had flouted his authority, and he determined to make her feel the weight of it now. When he had relieved his feelings by a few round oaths, he declared his resolve of going in person to the Princess's chamber and surprising the lovers; but Countess Platen threw herself in his way and entreated him not to go. It would certainly, she pleaded, lead to disturbance, and probably result in a public scandal. The great thing was to keep an affair of this kind from being known, and if His Highness would leave the matter to her, she would find a way to arrest Königsmarck quietly, and then the Elector might punish the delinquents at his leisure, and far more effectually. The first burst of his rage being over, the easy-going Elector gave way. He hated scenes and he hated trouble, and so he agreed to shift the disagreeable task upon the Countess, who was only too ready to undertake it. At her suggestion he signed a warrant to the Commandant of the palace guard, authorising him to give the Countess Platen four halberdiers, who were to accompany her and obey her in all things without question. That the Elector had nothing more in his mind than the arrest of Königsmarck is evident from the fact that he said to the Countess, with a touch of malice, he was sure his Colonel of the Guards was safe in her hands, as he was so good-looking.

Armed with the Elector's sign-manual, the Countess went down to the guard-room and obtained four trusty halberdiers. After she had given them drink and sworn them to secrecy, she led the way through the dark corridors of the great rambling palace to the wing occupied by the Electoral Princess.

The Leine Schloss, or Royal Palace of Hanover, has been considerably altered since that fatal night; but the walls are still standing, and it is easy, even now, to follow the original plan of the castle. The Electoral Princess occupied a suite of rooms overlooking the River Leine, then spanned by a drawbridge, now by a permanent way. A wide corridor ran from her apartments, which still remains. This corridor touches at one end a magnificent hall, known as the Rittersaal, or Knights' Hall, and there was also a vestibule, or inner hall, hard by.

By the door of the Rittersaal the Countess paused, and peered down the long corridor leading to the Princess's apartments. There was no sound to be heard, but a faint glimmer of light beneath the door showed her that the Princess was still astir. The thought that Königs-marck was at this moment in her hated rival's arms excited Countess Platen beyond control. She turned to the four desperadoes, and ordered them to lie in ambush and await her signal, and then rush out and take the first man who passed, at all hazards, dead or alive. The halberdiers concealed themselves under the shadow of the huge projecting chimneypiece of the Rittersaal.¹ The Countess withdrew to the vestibule hard by, and there waited for her prey.

She had some time to wait, for the lovers, unconscious of danger, had so much to say that the hours flew by unheeded, and still they were absorbed in one another. They discussed every detail of the escape on the morrow,

¹ I visited the scene of the murder in 1898. This chimneypiece still remains, elaborately carved and wrought, a splendid monument of masonry. The Rittersaal, too, has little changed, except that it was re-decorated in the early part of this century. The long corridor has been laid down with parquet, but the attendants show the spot where the murder was committed.

and re-discussed every precaution against discovery. They would have talked till dawn had not Eléonore Knesebeck interrupted them and called attention to the fact that it was high time to put an end to the conversation. Still the lovers, perchance with a presentiment of the coming peril, were loth to part, until at length Knesebeck almost forced Königsmarck out of the chamber. With a last fond embrace he bade the Princess farewell until the morrow, bidding her be of good courage, for the hour was at hand when they would part no more. Of a truth it was their last parting.

La Confidente conducted Königsmarck to the outer door of the Princess's apartments, and there left him. There was no light, but he knew his way so well that he could find it in the dark, so he walked softly down the long corridor, humming a tune under his breath. It was characteristic of the man and his careless, dare-devil spirit that he treated the affair so lightly. He was embarked on a venture which would revolutionise his whole future life, which would set every Court in Europe by the ears, and involved the happiness of the woman he loved; yet it all weighed so lightly with him that he left her humming a tune. Yet elopement with an Electoral Princess was a somewhat serious undertaking even in those days.

A few steps brought Königsmarck to the door in the left-hand corner of the corridor by which he had been admitted, opposite the Rittersaal. The door had purposely been left unbarred for his exit; it was now locked. The tune died on his lips, and he turned to retrace his steps. At that moment the four desperadoes sprang from their hiding-place and rushed upon him with their weapons. The unfortunate man realised that he was caught in a trap; but, though taken by surprise and compar-

atively unarmed, he defended himself doughtily. For a few minutes there was a fierce conflict, during which two of his adversaries were wounded, and though Königs-marck was fighting in the dark against four armed men, the result seemed uncertain until his sword snapped in twain. This placed him at the mercy of his assailants, and he fell, severely wounded in the head by a cut from a battle-axe, and run through the body by a sword. Even as he fell his cry was, "Spare the Princess! Spare the innocent Princess!" and then he swooned.

The men bound and dragged him, all bleeding as he was, into the vestibule, where Countess Platen awaited her victim. By the light of a feeble candle she bent over him and peered fearfully into his face. Things were worse than she had bargained for, and at first it seemed that he was already dead. But no; he opened his eyes. At the sight of his enemy's malignant face Königs-marck realised that he was a victim of her hate, and he rallied all his ebbing strength to curse her bitterly for the foul thing she was. His lips were shut by the foot of his murderess, who, pretending to slip on his blood, trod by design upon his mouth. Too weak to resent the outrage, Königs-marck swooned once more. He recovered consciousness again, only to protest with feeble tongue and broken words the innocence of the Princess. Then his head fell back, and he died with her name on his lips.

At first Countess Platen refused to believe that he was dead, and made every effort to restore him to life, pouring cordial down his throat, rubbing his hands, and binding up his wounds; but when she saw it was too late her anxiety gave place to terror and perhaps to remorse. She cherished a sort of tigress's passion for the murdered man, though she would rather see him dead at her feet,

as he now was, than in the arms of her rival. When she gave the word to take him, dead or alive, she hardly contemplated so literal an obedience to her orders, and she bitterly upbraided the soldiers for their blunder and excess of zeal. The assassins were no less frightened than the Countess, when they realised that the murdered man was none other than the popular Count Königsmarck. The Countess did not fail to take advantage of their consternation by declaring that the Elector would of a surety hang the lot of them, if they did not swear the Count's death was due wholly to his own desperate resistance. This they at once vowed, and declared that in the darkness they could not see what they were doing; they acted only on the defensive, and he rushed blindly upon their weapons. The Countess rehearsed them carefully in this story, and made them promise to testify the same, separately and collectively, to the Elector.

The Countess then repaired to the Elector's apartments, and with many tears and much trepidation told him of the fatal mishap, which she ascribed wholly to Königsmarck's recklessness. The Elector was aghast at what had occurred and greatly enraged at the way the Countess had abused his authority. He would have punished Königsmarck for his presumption by arrest and ignominious dismissal from the Hanoverian service, but he never contemplated his murder. Cruelty and assassination were not among the vices of Ernest Augustus, and throughout his reign no deed of violence could be laid to his charge. Moreover, he foresaw that by this wicked crime the very thing he had most desired to avoid—publicity—would be brought about, very painful family scandal would be dragged before the world, and he could not hope to escape the odium which was sure to accrue. Königsmarck was known throughout Europe; he had

many powerful friends at the Courts of Saxony, Sweden, and Denmark, possibly England and France too: some of these would certainly raise a storm when they heard of the foul manner of his death. Ernest Augustus in his old age did not care to burden his conscience with a crime which would bring harm to him, and disrepute to his house. In fact, it was worse than a crime; it was a stupid blunder, which when known would involve the Electoral Court in no end of difficulties. So the old Elector stormed and raged at his favourite, cursing her in no measured terms, and vowing he would never forgive her. She was astounded at his fury. Never in all the long years of her ascendancy had she seen him like this, and, indeed, her influence over him was never the same after that night. It was with much difficulty that she contrived to bring the Elector to something like reason. She pointed out the uselessness of mere denunciations, bringing to bear the unanswerable argument that the man was dead and nothing could call him back to life.

Meanwhile the hours were slipping by and some action must be taken unless Königsmarck's body were to be left in the vestibule all night and discovered in the morning. Countess Platen pointed out that the evil consequences the Elector dreaded were dependent upon the Count's death being known, and they might all be avoided if it were concealed. Why should it not be concealed? No one had seen him enter the palace except her trusted spies, and no one had seen him inside its walls except herself, the halberdiers, the Princess, and Knesebeck. For herself and the soldiers she could answer, and there was an easy way of stopping the mouths of the Princess and her waiting-woman.

The Elector listened, ever ready to avoid a difficulty, and presently intimated that, since she had got him into

the mess, she must get him out of it. This the Countess expressed herself as ready and able to do. The Elector then reluctantly accompanied her to the room where the murdered man still lay, guarded by his assassins. These men¹ were sworn, under penalty of death, not to disclose a word of their night's work. Königsmarck's pockets were searched and the contents handed over to the Elector. Then the corpse was dragged to a hole, or *treppe*, hard by, thrust down, covered with quicklime, and the place walled up. The blood-stains were carefully washed from the floor, and every trace of the murder was obliterated. The men must have worked very quickly and expeditiously. No one in the sleeping palace was aroused, and everything was completed before the morning light, which, at that time of the year in Hanover, began to dawn soon after three o'clock.

Thus perished miserably, with his body given the sepulture of a dog, Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck, the head of a noble and famous family, and one of the most brilliant adventurers who strutted across the stage of Europe in the seventeenth century. It may be truly said of him that nothing in his life became him so well as the way he quitted it. He died bravely, fighting against overwhelming odds, and he died gallantly,

¹ Of these halberdiers little is known. One was named Bushmann, and is said to have made a confession on his death-bed to a priest named Cramer of his part in the murder. He is said to have been so badly wounded in the struggle by Königsmarck that he could do nothing for six weeks, but the authority for this statement is doubtful. Local tradition gives the name of another of these men as Luders, who, from the date of the crime, became the owner of an estate given him by the Hanoverian government. His descendants until recently lived at Hanover, and may be living there still for aught I know, and are well-to-do people. Some information of both these men is given in Cramer's *Aurora Königsmarck*.

defending with his last breath the honour of the woman he loved. That he loved the Princess, as far as it was in his nature to love any one, must be admitted; it was not the highest kind of love, but a passion selfish in its essence, to which men of his kind are prone, very fierce while it lasted and very real, but probably not enduring. He made great sacrifices for her sake, refused honour, promotion, fame, all that men hold dear; so he must have loved her after his fashion. That he was unworthy of the love she gave back to him fourfold must be admitted also; he was utterly unworthy. Yet to judge him fairly we must judge him by the standards of his time. These standards were not high ones. He lived in an age of profligacy and in Courts where laxity of manners and morals were the order of the day, and he was lax and profligate accordingly. But if he were no better he was no worse than his compeers, and certainly does not deserve the censure which has been heaped upon him; for, surrounded as he was by parasites and flatterers, the marvel is not that he was so bad, but that he was as good as he was. The worst part of his conduct was his intrigue with Countess Platen—conduct impossible to palliate or excuse, and which brought its own punishment. Otherwise he had his own rough standard of honour, and as far as we can see he acted up to his lights, which certainly were not bright ones. He was a brave soldier, fearless in the field; he was open-handed, generous to a fault, and those who knew him best were greatly attached to him. His sisters loved him, his servants were devoted to him, and these things speak in his favour. Of him it may be said his vices were those of his era, his virtues were all his own. He did wrong, let us admit it, but he paid the penalty with his blood.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RUIN OF THE PRINCESS

What if my life be all undone
And all things false below the sun,
Yet still I have been true to one—
Most passionately true !

LADY ARABELLA ROMILLY.

AFTER Königsmarck had left, the Princess passed most of the night in packing up her jewels, sorting and burning papers, and completing arrangements for her flight. It was arranged that, on receipt of a note from Königsmarck in the morning, the Princess and her lady-in-waiting should steal disguised to some quiet spot in the city, and thence escape in his coach, which, it afterwards transpired, was under orders to start for Dresden at a moment's notice. Outside Hanover the order would have been reversed; the coachman would have been told to drive with all speed to Wolfenbüttel, and once across the Hanoverian frontier the fugitives would have been safe from pursuit.

During the night Knesebeck fancied that she heard sounds, but thought nothing of them. Königsmarck had promised to send the Princess word early in the morning, but when the day wore on and nothing came she grew anxious, and her anxiety increased when she learnt that he had not returned home and his servants knew nothing of his whereabouts. His absence did not trouble his servants as the Count was given to nocturnal adventures

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and often remained away for days together. But it troubled the Princess greatly and she began to fear that some evil had befallen him. Presently some one came into the ante-chamber with the rumour that Königs-marck had fought a duel with Count Lippe and had been run through the body. Greatly alarmed the Princess sent to Marshal Podevils to find out if the report were true but the Marshal said that it was groundless and Königs-marck was doubtless safe and well. Later when the Princess attempted to go out she was informed that it was the Elector's pleasure she should not leave her apartments and no reply was vouchsafed to her remonstrance. Her children were in the habit of coming to see her daily at a certain hour but this day they came not and when she requested their presence she was told that the Elector had given orders they were not to be admitted and the young Prince George Augustus was dining with the Elector alone.

By this time the Princess had no doubt that she was betrayed and gave herself up to a passionate agony of grief; while Knesebeck, though greatly frightened also, vainly endeavoured to comfort her. Great though the Princess's fear was, and great though her peril, she gave little thought to her own danger; all her anxiety was for Königs-marck's safety. She was in the same plight as she had written to him long ago: "I fear that we are betrayed. I am trembling on the edge of a precipice but my own danger is the least of my anxieties. I scarcely think of the misfortunes inevitable and unavoidable if we are discovered: you, only, occupy my thoughts."¹ Then her terrors were imaginary; now they were real. At the very moment of fruition all her hopes were dashed to the ground, and she saw before her nothing but ruin

¹ *Vide* p. 241.

and lifelong misery. To all her frenzied inquiries (and it was no use sending Knesebeck for further information, as that lady had now been ordered not to quit the Princess's chamber) she could elicit no reply; and the fact that she was a prisoner in her apartments made her fear the worst. She passed the night in a torment of anxiety.

Meantime the inquiries which Knesebeck had started set Königsmarck's servants on the same track, and all sorts of rumours flew around Hanover. It was reported that the previous night Königsmarck, surrounded by a bright light, had been seen in the palace through the windows, and a crowd assembled outside the gates, to the manifest discomfort of the Elector, who gave orders for them to be dispersed. So passed Monday. The next day, Tuesday, July 3, Hildebrand, Königsmarck's secretary, went to Marshal Podevils to get information, if possible, of his master's fate, as there was now a report that he was imprisoned in the palace. Podevils, who had always been a good friend of the Königsmarck family, and who must have suspected that there was foul play, nevertheless stood loyally by his master, the Elector, and said: "The Count will be found somewhere. There is no use making a fuss. Tell the servants to keep quiet."

Up till now no rumour had reached Celle of the catastrophe, for we find the English envoy, Cresset, writing on this date: "The Electoral Prince is amusing himself in Berlin, and the Electoral Princess is always ill at Hanover." ¹

The following day Hildebrand received a strong hint to keep quiet, but nevertheless he dispatched a trusty servant to Dresden to tell the Elector of Saxony of his master's disappearance. Hardly had he done so than the Elector of Hanover sent three officials to search

¹ Cresset's *Despatch*, Celle, July 3, 1694.

Königsmarck's rooms thoroughly, and particularly his writing-table. Several papers were seized, and the rooms and their contents were sealed up with the official seal. The next day Hildebrand wrote a guarded letter to Königsmarck's sisters at Hamburg to tell them that their brother was missing, and asking for directions as to what he was to do with his effects. He added that he believed the Count was still alive, and asked them to wait eight days before demanding his restoration; but so frightened was he, lest the Hanoverian authorities might intercept this letter, that he did not mention that the Count's rooms had been searched and his papers seized.

These same papers sealed the doom of the Princess. They were taken to the Elector, who went through them carefully with the Platens. They were found to include many letters from Sophie Dorothea to her lover from the beginning of the year, and especially during his absence at Dresden, detailing minutely the story of her wrongs. They showed evidence of an extended secret correspondence, but the letters before January were missing. (They had passed into the hands of Aurora, and were in her keeping; they are the letters published in this book.) But though these could not be found, there remained more than enough to reveal everything. The cypher was easily made out, and though some of the Princess's letters were written in a disguised hand, and some transcribed by Knesebeck, this did not conceal anything, but only served to implicate the lady-in-waiting in the intrigue. The letters contained convincing proofs of the Princess's passion for Königsmarck and of her hatred of her husband and the House of Hanover. They contained, too, many severe reflections on her father's harshness, especially when he refused to grant her a separate maintenance,—words written in the heat of anger, and

perhaps forgotten as soon as written, but the writing remained. They afforded, also, full evidence of her projected flight to Wolfenbüttel, in which Frau von Maitsch and Knesebeck were implicated—an act of treason in itself. The old Elector was incensed at these revelations; and though he might have overlooked the intimacy with Königsmarck, for he was not hard on such weaknesses, he could not forgive the intrigue with his arch-enemy of Wolfenbüttel. This prejudiced him hopelessly against the Princess, and made him harden his heart against any thought of mercy. It was clear that not only the honour, but the safety of his House demanded that the Princess should be kept in durance vile.

The Electress Sophia, who had now been informed of the course of events, had no word strong enough to express her condemnation of the offender. She at last saw a chance of ridding herself for ever of the daughter of the d'Olbreuse, and she hailed it gladly. There was no mercy in the heart of the Electress for her erring daughter-in-law, nor would she hearken to any plea of extenuating circumstances. Yet if she had reflected she might have seen that it was she who had helped to drive the unhappy woman to these desperate steps. A little kindness, a little forbearance, a word of advice at the right season might have saved Sophie Dorothea: but no help ever came from the Electress Sophia.

Meantime the Princess, half-crazed with fear and suspense, implored to see the Elector and to know whereof she was accused; but no answer was returned to her prayers. She wrote long letters to her parents at Celle, complaining bitterly of the indignities to which she was subjected, and begging them to come to her succour. But at Celle she had been forestalled by Count Platen,

who, on the discovery of the secret correspondence, posted off to Duke George William under orders of the Elector. Count Platen laid bare to the Duke the whole miserable story, and last, but not least, told him of the Princess's aspersions upon her father. He showed him the Princess's own letters to Königsmarck, especially those which animadverted on her father's meanness and cruelty in refusing her shelter from her enemies at Hanover.

The Duke of Celle was wounded to the quick when he read these letters, and enraged beyond measure; his pride was hurt, too, by the dishonour done to his House. His standard of morality was not a high one, but he held that princesses of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg should be above reproach, as in the case of his own wife and the Electress Sophia. The Electoral Prince's many infidelities formed to him no excuse for his wife going astray. He argued that however immoral a man might be, he could not possibly introduce spurious offspring into the family, or affect the legitimacy of the succession. The old Duke prided himself on being a blunt, straightforward man, and he had a horror of intrigue and double-dealing. From every point of view it seemed to him that his daughter's conduct was as bad as it could be—a view in which Platen did not hesitate to back him up.

With the Duchess of Celle it was different. However culpable she might deem her daughter to be, she would not forsake her in her desperate straits, for she believed that the Prince was far more culpable than she. The Duchess, too, refused to believe, however imprudent her daughter might have been, that she was actually guilty with Königsmarck. She reminded the Duke of how alone and unprotected his daughter was, how surrounded by enemies, whose cruelty had goaded her to these

desperate steps. She urged that her harsh expressions about her father were written when she was beside herself, and therefore allowance was to be made for them. Then, seeing he was still obdurate, she threw herself at his feet, and with tears and prayers besought him not to desert his only child in her hour of trouble. But the Duke would hear no reason. His wife had long since lost her influence over him, and he cursed her, and her daughter, and the day when he first brought her to his house, and drove her from him with bitter words. The Duchess next went to Bernstorff, who had ever shown himself her enemy, and besought his aid in this terrible crisis, offering him a large sum of money if he would work for the interests of the Princess and do what he could to mitigate the Duke's anger against her.

Bernstorff, already in the pay of Hanover, double traitor that he was, did not reject the proffered bribe, and hypocritically promised the Duchess that he would use his best exertions. It must have been a triumph to his mean soul to see this proud and imperious woman humbling herself before him as a suppliant. He knew well her day was over, that the sun of her power had set for ever: the ruin of the daughter meant also, comparatively speaking, the ruin of the mother. The Duchess Eléonore had indeed to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs. For years she had planned and laboured until she had reached the summit of her ambition, and now she was hurled from it by the cruellest blow that Fate could have dealt her. Yet her mother's heart beat true. She had no reproaches for her erring daughter, only love; and, bitter though her fall was, it was not half so bitter as her impotence to help.

Though the Duchess could do little, she did not cease to importune every one concerned—the Duke, Bernstorff,

and Platen—that the Princess should be treated with leniency; and especially she pleaded against harsh and hasty judgment. Had it not been for those unlucky letters she might have succeeded, for the Duke's anger was not wont to be long-lived; but unfortunately they remained, and bore damning evidence against the unhappy Princess. Count Platen's mission to the Court of Celle was first to prejudice the Duke against his daughter and then to take counsel with him as to what should be done. There were grave issues at stake, and it was important that whatever steps were taken should be taken in concert between the two Courts. Things had come to a desperate pass; but it was resolved not to abandon all efforts to bring about, not a reconciliation, for that was impossible, but an arrangement which might obviate the necessity of public scandal.

This task was very difficult, and was rendered more so by the irreconcilable attitude of the Princess. She was still ignorant of Königsmarck's fate, but she refused positively to remain at Hanover of her own free will. To keep her there as a prisoner would give occasion for the enemy to blaspheme and the Courts of Hanover and Celle were anxious above all things to keep the real facts of the case from leaking out. Both Courts resolved that Königsmarck's name should not be even mentioned in connexion with the Princess, and that any course agreed upon should be carried out as though the Count had never existed. Pending further negotiations, it was resolved to remove the Princess to her father's territory—not to the castle of Celle, for that would look as though he condoned her conduct and bring her and her mother together—but to Ahlden, a lonely magistrate's house in a distant village, some twenty miles from Hanover and Celle respectively, where she would be effectually cut off

from intercourse with the world. It was determined, if possible, to give this removal the appearance of voluntary flight; and the imprisonment of Knesebeck was also decided upon.

While Count Platen was at Celle the Princess had addressed another letter to the Elector, who had always hitherto been inclined to treat her with indulgence, asking for an interview with him and for permission to be allowed to retire to the territory of Celle. The Elector merely acknowledged the letter, saying the matter was under consideration.

The return of Count Platen to Hanover, bringing the news of how utterly Duke George William condemned his daughter's conduct, deprived the unhappy woman of her last chance of protection; her own father had turned against her, and there was now no longer any need to treat her with consideration, or even with respect. Knesebeck was arrested forthwith, and without any explanation was hurried off to prison. Then the Princess knew that she must expect the worst.

As Count Platen had seen the Duke of Celle, he was deemed the fit and proper person, despite the infamous conduct of his wife, to interview the Princess, and conduct the difficult and delicate negotiations necessary to bring her to reason. Armed therefore with the Elector's authority he went to the Princess's apartments, entrusted with full power to deal with her as need required. The Princess had now been shut up in her rooms for nearly a fortnight under strict surveillance, without any explanation having been vouchsafed, though she had guessed the reason but too well.

Platen went expecting to find her humble and contrite; instead he found her angry and defiant, and most indignant that he of all people should have been sent to her:

she did not forget that she was still the Electoral Princess and the heiress of Celle, and her first question was why the Elector had not come to see her himself. Platen replied that His Highness bade him say that he declined to have any further communication with her, and had sent him to communicate to the Princess the fact that she would no longer be permitted to remain at the Court of Hanover. To this the Princess replied that she desired nothing better than to go away from it for ever; it had been her wish for a long time past. But she demanded the reason of her unjustifiable detention. Platen retorted that her detention was not unjustifiable; it was in accordance with the orders of her father as well as of the Elector, and she had brought it upon herself by her misconduct. The Princess haughtily asked him to what he referred, and he replied, *tout court*, to her criminal intimacy with Königsmarck; and by way of thrusting the insult home, added that her imprisonment was likely to be prolonged as it was suspected that she was pregnant by Königsmarck. The Princess's anger blazed forth at this coarse insult, and she asked Platen if he mistook her for his shameless wife. Platen rejoined that it was useless for the Princess to equivocate or to deny: everything was discovered and known; they had possession of her letters, and her lover had met with his deserts. The Princess's face blanched, and she exclaimed, "Where is Königsmarck?" Platen answered that the Count was discovered leaving her chamber on the night of July 1, and had been killed in resisting his arrest.

This cruel blow completely shattered the Princess's self-control; her agony and despair were piteous to behold. The thought of Königsmarck's murder swallowed up all else, and, lost to the sense of her own peril, she burst into weeping and lamentations, praying God to

take her, since he was dead, and vowing she would live no longer. Platen looked on unmoved, and noted down all these cries as so many proofs of her guilt. The Princess, beside herself with grief, denounced him in the most passionate terms, and not him only, but the Elector and all the House of Hanover as murderers and assassins; she refused to parley with Platen longer, and bade him begone from her presence. He left, not without giving orders for the Princess to be watched closely, as she threatened to kill herself. He reported all that had passed to the Elector, saying that the Princess was very violent, and impenitent, and more insubordinate than ever.

It is quite possible that the Princess would have committed suicide if she had possessed the means of doing so, for now, deprived of every friend and help on earth, she abandoned herself to despair. Beside the fact that Königsmarck was dead all else was nothing. She no longer cared for her safety or heeded her interests; life had nothing left for her. As she wrote to him long ago: "My life is bound up with yours. I would not live a moment if you were to be killed." And again: "Without you life would be intolerable, and imprisonment within four walls preferable than to go on living in the world."¹ The thought that her lover had been foully murdered coming from her chamber that night, with her kisses still warm on his lips, drove her nearly mad, and to her excited imagination his blood seemed to be on her head. Her horror and loathing of his assassins, among whom she included the Electoral family of Hanover as well as the Platens, knew no bounds; compromise with them was impossible, and her one desire was to quit this hated palace and find some quiet spot where she might

¹ *Vide* correspondence, pp. 270, 271.

die. To this frame of mind—absolute recklessness of the future and indifference to her own interests—must be attributed much of the subsequent attitude of the Princess, an attitude her enemies were not slow to take advantage of to work for her hurt.

The Princess's defiance was reported to Celle, and reconciliation was seen to be absolutely impossible or even an amicable settlement. Something would have to be done forthwith, and it was resolved that steps should be taken to procure a separation, on the ground of the Princess's wilful desertion of her husband and refusal to submit herself to her consort's connubial rights; the more drastic measure [of divorce was not yet hinted at. The first thing was to remove the Princess from Hanover, and communications passed daily between the two Courts as to when the Princess should be sent to Ahlden and the best means of twisting events so that the Königs-marck affair might be kept in the background, and colour given to the theory of wilful desertion

In accordance with this policy extraordinary care was then, and afterwards, taken to destroy or suppress any documents containing mention of Königs-marck's name. But though no reference to Königs-marck can be found in the manuscripts preserved in the Hanoverian Archives, they contain several interesting papers which have reference to the Princess's case, and among them may be found a despatch bearing on this particular crisis, a despatch of Platen to Bernstorff, dated July 13, 1694.

In it Platen replies to a letter from Bernstorff, and says that he gathers from it the Princess may set out for Ahlden on July 15. The Princess will hear this "with great satisfaction, as she is much annoyed that the journey cannot be undertaken on the 14th, so anxious is she to leave Hanover." After discussing the journey,

retinue, and luggage, he goes on: "As to the proposition of suggesting through Monsieur Busche to Madame la Princesse that she may declare, in order to save appearances, that she will not, and cannot live with the Prince, and therefore has begged leave to retire before his return here, we consider it desirable to spread such a rumour abroad, but not to suggest to the Princess that she should say it. We will speak to Her Highness to-morrow on the matter and see what her resolve is."

On July 15 Platen again writes to Bernstorff saying that he will put his letter of the 14th before the Elector, and does not doubt that he will fall in with all Bernstorff's proposals with regard to the journey to Ahlden. Further on is it again stated: "She [the Princess] is extremely anxious to leave this place, so much so that she receives the news that her journey must still be delayed a couple of days with great impatience." And finally: "The departure of Madame la Princesse Electorale cannot possibly pass for desertion, as she wishes to take all her belongings and attendants with her."

It is evident from these letters that the Courts of Hanover and Celle were anxious to save appearances, even to the extent of circulating a false report as to the Princess's flight.

On July 17 the journey was, so to speak, put upon the stage, and the Princess quitted Hanover for ever. On arrival at Ahlden she found herself a State prisoner.

Despite all these elaborate precautions, the truth was beginning to leak out. Every Court in Europe was talking, and, notwithstanding persistent denials, the imprisonment of the Princess and the disappearance of Königs-marck were coupled together. Louis XIV. asked the Duchess d'Orleans at supper whether it was true that

Königsmarck was imprisoned in a cellar of the castle at Hanover. Stepney writes from Dresden:

"We have whisperings as if one of Count Königsmarck's servants was come hither Post from Hanover to tell y^e Elector, His Master has been missing ever since the 30th of last month, the day he designed to leave Hanover and come hither, where he has been made lately Major Generall, to cleare a debt of m/30 Dollars which He won of y^e Elector when he made y^e campaign two years ago with you in Flanders. If it be true that y^e Count is not to be found, 'tis an even lay that they have used him little better than his Brother did Esquire Thinn, and perhaps a great Lady likewise (with whom he is suspected to have been familiar) may have been some cause of his misfortune. All I can say of y^e matter, the Electorall Prince of Hanover is at Berlin, acting Comedyies, and making merry with his sister y^e Electrice." ¹

In Hanover, too, the wildest rumours flew about, and in Celle, where the Princess was very popular, there was a great feeling of indignation at the way she was being treated. All this was very unpleasant to the ducal brothers, and feeling that some explanation was advisable, they drafted a circular letter to their representatives abroad "as a declaration for foreign wherever delicate points occur."

"The Princess at first, so runs the document, "displayed only some coldness towards her husband, but Fräulein von Knesebeck by degrees inspired her with such dislike to him that she begged from her father permission to return to her parents' home. Her father was displeased, and warned the Princess to place confidence in her husband. After that she paid her father a visit at Brockhausen; but when he learnt that the Prince was

¹ Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden *Despatch*, July 10, 20, 1694.

intending to make a journey to Berlin to see his sister, he sent his daughter back to Hanover with further admonitions that she should speak with her husband before his departure. But her dislike of her husband was so intensified by the machinations of Fräulein von Knesebeck that she determined not to await his return from Berlin. As soon as his arrival was imminent, she withdrew again from Hanover to her father. He, however, sent messengers to meet her on the way to forbid her coming to Celle, and insisted on her either returning, or withdrawing for the present to the magistrate's house at Ahlden, which lay on the way. The Princess chose the latter course; but her corrupter, Fräulein von Knesebeck, was arrested at the wish of the Duke George William."

This circular was duly dispatched to the Brunswick-Lüneburg envoys at the different Courts. The very fact of speaking of Ahlden as if it lay on the road between Hanover and Celle, when it was twenty miles away from either of them in an opposite direction, shows that this report relied on the ignorance of foreign Courts to conceal the actual circumstances. If we compare Count Platen's two letters already quoted with this circular, it is clear the whole policy of those in authority at this time was to mislead. There is no mention of Königsmarck's name, no more than if he had never existed. Knesebeck is made the scapegoat, and her conduct is distorted to veil the Princess's errors.

We must now leave the Princess for a space and return to the fate of her lover.

Though this circular to the foreign Courts might explain the Princess's captivity, it shed no light whatever on Königsmarck's disappearance, with which they were much more concerned. The Hanoverian govern-

ment at this time were verily at their wits' end to meet the inquiries which beset them on every side, and the truth that murder will out was being proved once more. The Count's sisters were most untiring in their efforts to discover their missing brother. Acting on the secretary's advice, the Countess Aurora and the Countess Lewenhaupt, then at Hamburg, waited twelve days after receiving his letter, before taking any steps, in the hope that their brother might turn up. Then they wrote to the Elector of Hanover for information, saying that they were credibly informed he was imprisoned in the Elector's palace. To this letter, as to all others, from whatever quarter, the Elector replied, saying that he had no knowledge of Königsmarck's whereabouts, nor was he in any way responsible for him. On receiving this unsatisfactory reply Aurora set out for Hanover and proceeded to prosecute a vigorous search. At Hanover she was simply ordered to leave, and given a time to quit the town.¹ She then went to Celle, where Bernstorff told her that her importunate demands would only have the effect, in case her brother was in the hands of the Hanoverian government, of making them refuse to give him up²; so after remaining some time at Celle without any result, she set out for Dresden to implore the aid of the Elector of Saxony.

Before the arrival of Aurora the Elector of Saxony had already instituted a search for the vanished man. On receipt of a letter from Hildebrand he sent Bannier to Hanover on July 13 to demand the instant restitution of Königsmarck, on the ground that he was major-general

¹ *The Magazine of the Historical Association for Lower Saxony*, 1879, page 65.

² Communication of Bernstorff at the Conference of Engesen, August 5, 1694.

in a cavalry regiment of the Saxon army, under orders to join the active forces on the Rhine. Aghast at this peremptory message from his brother of Saxony, the Elector Ernest Augustus shuffled and said that he had no wish to detain the Count, and did not hold him in his power. Bannier rejoined that Königsmarck had disappeared, and it was the duty of the Elector to institute a search for him. The answer was that His Serene Highness, "in personal remembrance of the high services as colonel rendered by the vanished man, would not have failed to institute such an inquiry, but the fact had been elicited from the Count's own servants that he had often gone away at night without leaving any message, and remained away for days at a time, and so there was no ground for instituting inquiries." Bannier then pertinently asked why the Count's belongings had been sealed and his papers seized. This was met by the statement that when an officer in the Hanoverian service died it was customary to subtract his official papers; and stress was laid on the fact that the Count was still in the Hanoverian army when he vanished, and therefore the Elector, though willing to do all in his power, could not rightly be expected to hand the man over if he were found.¹ But, however much the Hanoverian ministers might evade or deny, it was firmly believed at Dresden that Königsmarck's disappearance was connected with the Princess. Something of this may be gathered from the following letter, which Stepney wrote at this time to Cresset, the English envoy at Hanover:

"I have great curiositie to know what piece of mischief has been brewing at Hannover. If you dare not trust it at length, I must beg you to satisfy me in Cypher, as likewise with y^e particulars of your Princess's ruine.

¹ *Vide Article in Magazine for Lower Saxony, 1879.*

Amours are fatal in these parts; wee have had a scene of them here, and may hereafter have more y^e like nature. But at present y^e Tragedy is removed to y^r Courts, and I fear Daggers and poyson will be as familiar among you as they are in Italy. Y^r Princes have been often there, and may have learned y^e humour of y^e country of despatching people without Noise. A servant or two of Count Königsmarck run frequently betwixt this place and Hannover, (as I have heard Count Berlo's dog did betwixt y^e Camp and Brusses after y^e Battle of Fleuros,) seeking out their master, but have no tidings: our Elector sent one of his Adjutants, Mr. Bannier (a Swede likewise) to Hannover, I believe with a design to stopp y^e blow if it was not yet given. But I suppose the Corps by this time is in y^e common shore, and our Elector by y^e accident has cleared y^e debt m/30 R he had lost to him two years ago at play. I have been told his sister raves like Cassandra, and will know what is become of her brother; but at Hannover they answer, like Cain, that they are not her brother's keeper, and that y^e Body should be found (which I believe as little as y^t of Moses), yet y^e circumstances of y^e Murder will be left as much in y^e dark as y^e manner of despatching Sir Edmonbury Godfrey has been. He was not recommended to be by Mr. Stratford; I knew him in England, at Hamburg, in Flanders and at Hannover for a dissolute debauchee whom I would always have avoided. By chance I ate with him here at Count Frizews and our new privy counsellor Haxthausen, and by chance likewise they did suppe with me, whereas they were invited to Mr. Bomenburgh's who too late remembered it was a fish-night and so shifted off his own company on me. This is all I have to do with y^e spark, and if he has been so black as

we think he is, his Fate (be what it will) is not to be pityed." ¹

To modify the somewhat cavalier treatment of Bannier at Hanover a statement was drawn up by the Hanoverian government and Count Witgenstein was dispatched to Dresden as an envoy extraordinary to explain matters personally. Witgenstein was well received by the Elector of Saxony, and the matter would probably have blown over without further noise had it not been for the arrival at Dresden of the Countess Aurora. This young lady, who possessed considerable personal attractions, and was already favourably known to the Elector, threw herself at his feet, and, repeating all that she had gleaned of her brother's disappearance at Hanover and Celle, besought his powerful aid and protection. Augustus the Strong could never refuse the prayer of a beautiful woman. He assured Aurora that he would do everything in his power to discover the missing man, and force the Elector of Hanover, if need be at the point of the sword, to give him up. Stepney writes again:

"Connigsmark's sister is come hither under pretence of getting y^e Elector to interest himself more warmly than he has done hitherto with the Dukes of Brunswick-Luneburg about her brother's liberty, if he be still alive: she believes he is, and wherefore y^e Elector has sent orders to his Adjutant Bannier to demand him vigorously. Count Witgenstein (who is here from Hannover) endeavours to mitigate y^e Elector by alledging he ought not to concern himself for a person who was actually in the Hannoverian service having received y^e pay three days before he was missing, besides that it is usual before laying down to make up accounts with the Regiment, to take leave at y^e head of it, and so have a Congé

¹ Stepney to Cresset, Dresden *Despatch*, July 24 / August 3, 1694.

in form signed by y^e Master. All which ceremonies being omitted, he was lyable to be punished as a Deserter if he were yet to be found which y^e Elector of Hannover will know nothing of, he being a debauched rambling sparke, who kept irregular hours, and consequently it is next to an impossibility to given an account what may become of him. I cannot tell if y^e Elector of Saxony will be contented with these excuses. Count Witgenstein told me yesterday his greatest misfortune is that the Elector has not given y^e cognizance of this affaire to his Privy Council, but has referred it as he does almost all others to his favourite Haxthausen, and he communicates all to his cousin y^e Dane, who, being a *boutefeu*, seeks all occasions to embroile this house with that of Hannover, and thinks he has now got a good handle besides y^e old dispute about Saxe-Lawenburg, which is only covered with Ashes, and will certainly break out when time serves. If y^e Count be dead, I suppose y^e other syde of his sister's errand will be to try if she can recover any part of y^e m/30 Dollars (which as I told you) ye Elector had lost to her brother in Flanders, and I am persuaded she will not take his death to heart when she has once got her hand on his inheritance. They have lodged her in y^e Court." ¹

Augustus the Strong again told Bannier to prosecute his inquiries at Hanover with the utmost vigour; and thus it came about that, while the Hanoverian envoy in Dresden was being cordially received, the Saxon envoy in Hanover was pressing and threatening more than ever. Bannier declared he was instructed by his master to demand once more the restitution of Königsmarck sharply and energetically, and a refusal might entail mischief, for his master had promised their brother's

¹ Stepney's *Despatch*, Dresden, August 14/24, 1694.

production to the Count's sisters, and made a point of honour of fulfilling his promise. The situation was certainly very unpleasant for the Hanoverian government, for it was feared that Saxony might give its powerful support to the enemies of Hanover—Wolfenbüttel, Münster, and Denmark.

The brothers of Hanover and Celle, driven to extremities, appealed to the Emperor, and declared that unless Augustus the Strong took up a more reasonable attitude they would withdraw their troops from the Allies. This threat made a strong impression in Vienna, where the action of the Saxon Court was called preposterous. How could the Elector Augustus, the Emperor asked, demand from the Elector of Hanover a man who had not been given into his charge? The Emperor and the Elector of Brandenburg brought pressure to bear on Saxony, and both these potentates used their influence in opposition to the promptings of the Countess Aurora. Stepney writes at this time:

"The Danish Haxthausen pretends to be going from hence in a day or two and y^e Countess of Königsmarck likewise. The Elector had used her with great distinction, and has supp'd with her twice with y^e Privy Counsellor Haxthausen at his House, some think these Curttisyas are only to put her of with good words since there is nothing more to be done for her Brother. However, Mr. Bannier is still soliciting at Hannover, and Count Witgenstein making the best excuses he can here."¹

It would seem from this that Aurora was losing ground; but still Bannier was instructed to insist at the Court of Hanover for Königsmarck's restitution. He therefore offered Count Platen two alternatives—either Königs-

¹Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden, August 17 / 27, 1694.

marck was in confinement, or they had put an end to him. If the former, and his release was not to be obtained by mild measures, His Highness would be obliged to show his just resentment and take others; and he let slip the remark casually that other Powers would be likely to interest themselves in the fate of Königs-marck, and make common cause with the Elector of Saxony if His Highness should be driven to resort to extreme measures. He went on to say that if Königs-marck did not reappear, "the witnesses whom they could produce would support Saxony to the astonishment of the whole world, and matters would come to extremities."

But Bannier's threats at Hanover were checkmated by Witgenstein's representations at Dresden, and eventually the long and violent altercation came to an end without anything having been done. How could it be otherwise? Königsmarck was dead, and all the princes and potentates of the world could not bring him back to life.

Stepney thus describes the final scene of the dispute: "Yesterday Count Witgenstein received an express from Hannover about Count Connigsmark, and had this morning audience of the Elector, in which (he tells me) he made long contestations in y^e Elector of Hannover's name, how willing he is to cultivate his friendship by doing all that could be desired of him, but that he protested he knows not what has become of y^e Person for whom application was made, and to y^e Question whether he was alive or dead no positive answer could be given, since after y^e best inquiry that could be made they were able to make no true discovery, which left a very strong suspicion that he is rather dead than Living. The Elector of Saxony seemed very moderate after this answer, as if he doubted not the truth of what had been offered and replied, only that he hoped as an instance of

friendship that y^e Elector of Hannover would give him notice as soon as he should learn any tidings of Count Coningsmark, and I believe here that y^e affair will end without causing any breach betwixt y^e two Electors. The Count's sister is gone hence, but I know not which course she steers." ¹

Thus ended the ineffectual search for Königsmarck. His disappearance nearly set Europe by the ears, and shows that he was a far more important personage than his enemies are wont to admit him to be.

If the Countess Aurora left Dresden, it was only for a time, and she returned later to be one of the many mistresses of Augustus the Strong. The result of their *liaison* was the birth of the most celebrated of all Augustus's three hundred and fifty-four illegitimate children—Maurice, the famous Marshal de Saxe.

Aurora soon found herself superseded in the fickle favour of the Elector, and a quarrel ensued between her and her Royal lover. Reproaches were mutual; and it would seem the Elector had also something against Aurora, since he reminded her that Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion. In reply she gave utterance to the celebrated *mot*: "The cases are not parallel: you are not Cæsar, and I am not your wife." The rest of Aurora's strange career and all that she did—how she withdrew to the Abbey of Quedlinburg, how she went on her ineffectual mission to the King of Sweden, and all the other events of her most eventful life, belong not to this history. Professor Palmblad has dealt with them fully in his historical novel *Aurora Königsmarck*.

¹ Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden, August 21 / 31, 1694.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DIVORCE

Here are full many men of counsel met;
Not one for me.

SWINBURNE, *Mary Stuart*.

Hope, withering, fled, and Mercy sighed, Farewell!

BYRON.

WE now return to the Princess at Ahlden, where she was still kept in rigorous imprisonment.

The fiction of the Princess's so-called desertion was maintained even in the instructions which Duke George William gave to his commandant for the treatment of the Princess on her arrival at Ahlden. The commandant was Seigneur de la Fortière, Grand Falconer to the Court of Celle. And the Duke wrote:

"1. Since it is my intention that my daughter should remain at Ahlden, and have no communication, either by letter or other means, with any one whatsoever until she returns to her duties with the Electoral Prince, her consort, the Seigneur de la Fortière will make himself acquainted with these wishes of mine and what I have ordered, as I do by this present. He is not to convey, nor permit to be conveyed by others to my daughter, any letters except such as come with an order signed by my hand; and in like manner he is not to dispatch, nor allow to be dispatched, any letter of my daughter's except with express permission from me.

"2. In conformity with this order, the Seigneur de la

Fortière will instruct the women, valets, and other domestics in attendance on my daughter and all who enter the castle, that those who have, or receive, letters from any one whatsoever in, or out of, the castle must place them in the hands of the Seigneur de la Fortière on pain of death.

“3. All letters which come for any of the servants, or which are sent by any on their business, will likewise be given to the Seigneur de la Fortière, and read by him, before being allowed to pass; and those which are allowed to go must be stamped with his seal. If the Seigneur de la Fortière finds the slightest cause for suspicion in them, he will send them direct to me.

“4. The Seigneur de la Fortière can have all persons searched by the officers or soldiers of the guard who give him the slightest cause to suspect them of being implicated in bringing forbidden messages or letters.

“5. Except those at Ahlden in attendance on my daughter, no one else will enter the castle without my express permission; and the above-mentioned servants are to have no conversation with any strangers—that is to say, with any others but those of the household and people of Ahlden—except in the presence of the Seigneur de la Fortière or of some one commissioned by him for that purpose; and the Seigneur de la Fortière will give orders that as soon as strangers arrive in the said Ahlden he shall be immediately informed of the fact.

“6. The women and other attendants on my daughter will not go out of the castle without the Seigneur de la Fortière's permission, and the remainder of the servants will only enter the castle at fixed hours to perform their duties, and will go away again as soon as they are done.

“7. My daughter will only leave the castle to take a walk, if she wishes, in the garden between the two

moats, and then she must be accompanied by the Seigneur de la Fortière.

“8. If my daughter wishes to take her meals in the *salon* outside her rooms, she will have permission to do so, and the persons whose business it is to be in waiting, and the footmen will attend at these meals; but the Seigneur de la Fortière will always be present, and, after rising from table, everybody will leave my daughter except the lady-in-waiting and her chamber attendants.

“9. The Seigneur de la Fortière will have the power to require the officer of the guard, in virtue of the orders I have given him for that purpose, to adopt strong measures to ensure the exact execution and observance of the above, as far as such may be necessary.”

It is very difficult to follow accurately the successive stages of the proceedings that followed the Princess's arrival at Ahlden, as most of the official documents written at the time were published with intent to deceive, and the greater part of the divorce proceedings have been suppressed; but Dr. Köcher, sometime keeper of the Hanoverian Archives, has collected together sundry fragments of documents which remain, and has published them with comments of his own in *Sybel's Historische Zeitschrift*—a most valuable contribution, in which he demonstrates that the divorce trial partook of the nature of a farce, inasmuch as everything had been determined beforehand. Schaumann, the historian, another eminent authority, on the other hand, maintains that the divorce proceedings were instituted from a real desire to bring about a reconciliation between the Princess and her husband. Here we have a conflict of opinion. But this much at least seems certain; the Court of Celle would gladly have brought about a reconciliation had it been

possible, and the Court of Hanover would probably have reluctantly agreed to one if it had been possible for them to get rid of the Princess and at the same time to keep her territory. But the determined attitude of the Princess to break at all hazards with the hated House of Hanover rendered from the first any attempt at reconciliation out of the question; and Köcher is no doubt right in his main contention. The only point where we differ from him in his elaborate study of the divorce question is that he seems to treat the Princess as though she were a lay figure, to be pulled about at will, and overlooks the fact that she was a passionate and self-willed woman, just now driven to bay by the death of her lover, and determined at all cost to free herself from her husband. Under no conditions would she make terms with Königs-marck's murderers, or return to the life she loathed; in her present state of mind she preferred imprisonment, or even death, to such an alternative. The only thing therefore that remained was to bring about a separation or divorce as expeditiously, and with as little scandal, as possible.

Meanwhile the Princess in the Castle of Ahlden was alone; her mother was not permitted to see her, and the only person suffered to approach her was a minister of religion. Soon after her arrival at Ahlden two ministers from the Court of Celle, Bernstorff and Bülow, came to wait upon the Princess. It must have been a bitter moment for her when she received them, for she looked to Celle for help, and none came. The two ministers spent some hours with her, and when they left they drew up a report of what happened in a protocol headed, "Report of what took place at Ahlden," which begins as follows:

"The reason of our journey was to tell the Princess the

true state of affairs, that everything was discovered, and therefore nothing could be denied or questioned; to tell her what would be publicly said in her defence, and how she ought to speak in public and conduct herself in the forthcoming divorce case."

In this document Königsmarck is not mentioned, but it is easy to see what is referred to in the expression "everything was discovered." The true reason was to be hidden, for the honour of the House; and the Princess was to acquiesce in a divorce on the ostensible ground of her wilful desertion. The ministers found her only too ready to fall in with their suggestions, and the report goes on to say: "and she acquiesces in the separation, and recognises that no other course could be taken. . . . They were to tell her what to do, and she would submit. . . ."

The ministers found her cast down and despondent, but hardly what they described as penitent, for despite their statement "that everything was known," they failed to elicit an avowal of conjugal unfaithfulness. The Princess admitted appearances were against her. They might think her culpable or not as they pleased, but she denied the actual offence *in toto*, and nothing ever made her swerve from this position. In this she was borne out by Knesebeck, then far away from her beloved mistress and in prison at Springe. This lady, though examined and cross-examined and threatened with punishment unless she told the whole truth, absolutely denied that the Princess had been guilty with Königsmarck, though she admitted "a few letters and indiscretions." Later she was examined again, on her removal to the fortress of Schwartzfels, and she still affirmed that the Princess was innocent, and no threats of imprisonment or torture made her swerve from her

loyalty. Years later, when she had gained her liberty and petitioned Duke George William for her confiscated property, she did not omit to bear witness again to the innocence of the Princess.

This, of course, opens up the much-vexed question of how far the Princess's love for Königsmarck went. Some there are, like Duke Antony Ulrich, who believe the Princess to be absolutely innocent, even in thought. This theory, however, is untenable, since both the Princess and Knesebeck admit, at least, to indiscretions. Others there are, like the Duchess d'Orleans, who considered the Princess absolutely bad; but their bias is manifest, and they produce no evidence in support of their contentions. Between these two classes are the more numerous company of witnesses, who include such eminent names as Schaumann and Köcher. These do not believe the Princess guilty of *actual* unfaithfulness to her husband. Köcher says, in summing up an elaborate argument: "We shall probably therefore hit the mark aright when we say that the Princess wandered on the edge of an abyss by vouchsafing to a man who was a foreigner and of loose morals not a criminal intimacy, but a confidence which was a slight on duty and propriety."

But it must be remembered that Köcher and Schaumann do not accept the authenticity of the letters, which they had never examined and have never seen, save for the few fragments published by Palmblad, confused as to the cypher and the dates, and possibly a stray letter in one or two essays. There remains another authority, Count Schulenburg-Klosterröde, who believes firmly in the authenticity of the letters, and yet agrees with Köcher that the love between the Princess and Königsmarck was never consummated. With all the good will

in the world, it is not easy to agree with this view, believing as we do in the genuineness of the letters, and when we remember the fiery passion breathed through them, the stolen meetings, the utter laxity of the morals of the time, and last, but not least, the harshness of the Princess's father, who would surely never have refused to see his only child and have condemned her to lifelong imprisonment if she had only been guilty of "indiscretion." When we remember all this, it must be admitted that the evidence against her is so strong as to be almost overwhelming. But let us give her the benefit of the doubt. This much is certain: she loved one man and one man only, she sacrificed everything for him, and she was faithful to her love in life and in death. Whatever were her mistakes, she was more sinned against than sinning, and it ill befits us to cast a stone.

When Bülow and Bernstorff returned to Celle, after their interview with the Princess at Ahlden, convinced that she was steadfast in her resolve never to return to Hanover, and would agree to anything which would bring about this result short of an avowal of actual guilt, matters were greatly simplified. The ministers of Celle were in favour of a separation, the Hanoverian government demanded a divorce, and, as the Princess's attitude was utterly unyielding, Celle gave way and a divorce was decided upon. We find Cresset about this time writing from Walsrode, a little country town near Ahlden:

"Our unlucky scene lies as it did, the divorce going forward, and we are all to be quite shamed. I have been twice shooting with this Duke just under the walls of the house where his daughter is confined. I hear she is suddenly to be removed into the country of Hanover. Next post I will write what I can learn of it to my Lord

Duke. At present I know nothing new. All things look tragical.”¹

The ministers of Hanover and Celle held several conferences at Engesen, where a plan was drawn up for the divorce of the Princess. It was resolved to form a special Consistorial Court to try the divorce case, and care was taken that everything should be done in due order and with an appearance of legality. Königs-marck's name was not to be so much as mentioned; indeed, how could it be mentioned when his avengers were knocking so loudly at the gates? Taking it for granted that the divorce would be decreed, the following arrangements were then made between the Elector and the Duke of Celle for the Princess's safe keeping and maintenance:

George William agreed to keep the Princess guarded at some magistrate's house in *his* country, and to settle on her the magistrate's house at Ahlden as her permanent residence in case of his demise. The retinue and personal attendants and guard which were to attend the Princess were arranged, and it was agreed that no changes should be made without the mutual approval of both the Elector of Hanover and the Duke of Celle. The Princess was to be allowed a sufficient establishment for her maintenance and that of her suite. Ernest

¹ Cresset's *Despatch*, August 14, 1694. The letter which Cresset mentions as being about to write to the Duke of Shrewsbury is not preserved in the State Paper Office, nor indeed are any letters of his at this time, save a few fragments probably overlooked, which have been quoted here. There is nothing bearing on the Princess or Königs-marck. As the English envoy's correspondence is voluminous just before and just after the catastrophe, these letters have been doubtless suppressed purposely: it is a pity, as they would have thrown great light on this vexed question.

Augustus was to allow her a yearly sum of eight thousand thalers (£1,200), and he agreed to raise this sum to £1,800 when her father died, and yet again by another £800 when she had completed her fortieth year—a sum total of £2,600 per annum, not a bad allowance when we consider the value of money in those days and the circumstances of the case. The Princess, moreover, was heiress to considerable property from her mother, which would remain untouched. In return, Duke George William conceded certain modifications of his daughter's marriage settlement, whereby the freehold lands he had bequeathed to her should pass directly to her son, Prince George Augustus, and the administration of the same should pass into the hands of the Electoral Prince. On only one point were the brothers unable to agree. Duke George William proposed that the love-letters of the Princess (the incriminating correspondence found in Königsmarck's rooms) should be sent to Celle, after the divorce, to be burnt, or they should be burnt at Hanover in the presence of the ministers of Hanover and Celle. This suggestion found no favour with Ernest Augustus, who put the matter off for the time being. Doubtless he feared that his brother might relent at some future time towards his daughter, and he did not wish to lose this damning evidence against the Princess.¹

Thus it will be seen that everything was settled before the Divorce Court assembled, and the verdict was treated as a foregone conclusion. The ministers drew out instructions for the judges and attorneys, and watched over the trial that ensued step by step.

The agreement above mentioned was signed by Duke George William and the Elector Ernest Augustus on

¹The fate of these letters is uncertain, but they were probably destroyed some years later by George II.

September 1, 1694, and a few days later the Princess was brought over from Ahlden to the magistrate's house at Lauenau, in Hanoverian territory, so as to be nearer the scene of the trial. Even this slight change was not effected without difficulty, for the Princess viewed with terror any return to the Principality of Hanover; but she was pacified by being told that as soon as the divorce was decreed she would be allowed to return to the territory of Celle—she believed as a free woman. This made her all the more impatient for a divorce and the more ready to concede anything and everything demanded by her enemies. The story that the Princess, shortly after her arrival at Lauenau, took the sacrament in the presence of the Hanoverian ministers, solemnly vowing her innocence and daring Countess Platen to do the same, is very dramatic, but lacks confirmation. It would contradict the evidence of the few genuine documents still remaining, which go to show that the whole policy of the ministers of both Courts was to hush up any allusion to a criminal intrigue.

Everything having been now arranged, the tribunal of the Divorce Court began its solemn farce. The court was composed of a president and eight judges, four lay and four spiritual, in equal numbers from Celle and Hanover respectively. Privy Councillor Albert Philip von Busche was appointed President by both Hanover and Celle. All these judges were sworn by a special oath: "To judge in this matter uprightly and honestly to the best of our understanding, in accordance with godly and worldly rights and the custom of the Christian Evangelical Church, and not to let ourselves be led away or hindered by anything, whatever its name may be." A goodly oath indeed; and yet it had little meaning for most of them, though some of the judges had qualms of con-

science and did not prove quite the docile tools they were expected to be.

On September 20 the Divorce Court assembled at Hanover and received the suit of the Electoral Prince, who prayed for a dissolution of marriage on the ground of the wife's wilful desertion and refusal to grant him his connubial rights. This was duly set forth in a formal document presented to the court by the Prince's attorney. After considering it for two days the court sent it to the Princess at Lauenau, and requested a reply, leaving it to her option to decide whether she would submit her answer in writing, or make it orally by word of mouth to a deputation of the court. This was a fair proceeding, and guarded against the possibility of undue influence, but it did not agree with the ministerial programme; so the Government refused to sanction the alternative of an oral reply, lest the Princess might express herself too freely to the deputation. Marshal von Bülow, of Celle, and Thies, the attorney, were therefore directed by George William to go to Lauenau instead, and obtain a written declaration from the Princess in harmony with the policy already decided upon. Bülow was instructed, so Duke George William's direction read, "to seek an opportunity to speak to the Princess alone, and endeavour to remind her to take pains before everything else to express her answer in such terms as to give no possible further cause for exasperation [*aigreur*]." Further, Thies was to be introduced to the Princess in order to learn from her directly "whether she was agreeable to his superseding her attorney's functions, which, being the case, the Princess would accede to him full powers." Then the Princess "would furnish him with materials out of which he was to formulate her defence; and she was, among other matters, to declare positively whether she

would, or could, ever again prevail upon herself to return to her consort, the Electoral Prince, and, if not, whether she would be content to accept the verdict of the court on the matter."

The result of this mission was exactly what might have been expected. The Princess was quite incapable of looking after her interests, especially in this case, where they seemed to run counter to her inclinations, for she desired the divorce above all things, and fully believed that when it was obtained and she had obeyed her father's and her uncle's wishes she might safely trust to their indulgence and generosity. Subsequent events proved that she was wrong, but at the time her policy seemed the right one. She authorised the attorney to act for her as directed, and without ado signed a written declaration declaring in most emphatic language she would never again cohabit with her husband.

The Princess's declaration was withheld from the Divorce Court until it had been examined by the ministers. Vice-Chancellor Hugo of Hanover expressed himself dissatisfied with the wording, and he feared the Divorce Court would not be content. He therefore drafted another, more formally worded, to be submitted to the Princess.

As this document was in substance the same, the ducal brothers, who were then hunting at Göhre, professed indifference as to which should be presented; but Bülow put in a plea for the consideration of the Princess on the ground that she might be confused by having to sign another declaration. Bernstorff, always the enemy of the Princess, favoured the draft of Hugo, because it would have the effect "of inducing the court to imagine that the Princess was the much more self-willed and not to be overruled"; and he went on to write to Hugo in favour

of his draft, saying: "It shows a more rebellious spirit [*contumacia*], and the court will on that account have all the more cause to give a verdict of divorce." The matter was referred to Hugo, who naturally decided in favour of his own draft. Thies, the Princess's attorney, was then directed to go again to Lauenau and obtain the Princess's signature to this second document. He was instructed to exhort, "in a general way," the Princess to a reconciliation with her husband; but that the admonition was regarded as a mere form may be gathered from the fact that we find Bernstorff writing: "Although he [Thies] might bring the most powerful arguments to bear on the Princess's case in order to talk her over to return to her husband, he would effect nothing whatever." Bernstorff's surmise was quite right; the Princess was only too ready to play into the hands of her enemies, and Thies found her most impatient at the delay. She anxiously asked if the suit would result in a divorce. Her attorney replied that a definite declaration was necessary, the other not having been definite enough. She then took a pen and resolutely signed the new document laid before her, which was worded as follows:

"Now we [Sophie Dorothea] give the circumstances mentioned by the attorney of our Consort Louis, in the charge of desertion brought against us, their due place; but we cannot refrain from again adding that we adhere persistently to the resolution, once drawn up and constantly affirmed, that we will not, and cannot, ever again live in conjugal relations with our Consort Louis, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg, Prince Electoral, and we will therefore accept the verdict of the court on the matter."

Thies was by way of being a conscientious man, and had his doubts as to the wisdom of the suicidal policy the

Princess was pursuing. He therefore entered upon his task of advising the Princess without seeming to persuade; but she would not hear him. He, however, told her frankly that the result of her declaration would assuredly be a verdict acquitting the Prince and allowing him to marry again, and convicting her as the guilty party, and forbidding her to marry. The Princess answered firmly: "In spite of this, my determination is unalterable." Then Thies added a clause to the Princess's declaration stating that:

"In spite of the fact that all suitable and urgent advice from higher authorities has been given to the Princess, and pressed finally by myself as her appointed attorney, yet it must, to my great regret, be stated that nothing more could be extracted from Her Serene Highness, except the written declaration enclosed with this."

These documents were then sent to the Divorce Court.

Despite all these elaborate stratagems and precautions, the very thing happened which the ministers wished to avoid. The Divorce Court refused to be satisfied with the written declaration, and insisted on the necessity of an oral hearing. To this end a deputation of the judges was sent to Lauenau, that they might hear the Princess's declaration from her own lips and judge whether any undue influence had been brought to bear upon her.

The ministers of both Hanover and Celle were alarmed at this hitch in the proceedings, and immediately took steps to prevent any untoward results. Another Conference was summoned at Engesen on November 15.

It is notoriously difficult to save those who are bent on their own destruction, as the Princess seemed to be; but in the meantime the Duchess of Celle was making every effort on behalf of her daughter, and seized on the opportunity afforded by this delay to urge some concessions.

The result was that, when the Conference met at Engesen, Bernstorff brought forward, on the part of Duke George William, a motion to the effect that the separation should only be a judicial one (i. e. *a mensâ et thoro*); but the reason alleged—namely, that a complete separation would be prejudicial to the children—did not make the slightest impression on the Hanoverian ministers, who saw in this the hand of the Duchess of Celle. They replied with some logic, that if a separation of that kind was all that had been desired, it might have been arranged by the parties themselves without the services of the Divorce Court; and to make such a change so late in the day would cast a slight not only on the Electoral Prince, but on the House of Hanover. Seeing they would not give way, Bernstorff changed his tactics, and put in a plea that the verdict might at least not be made public. But the Hanoverian ministers declared that such a course would lead to prejudicial interpretations; and the Conference broke up without coming to an agreement. The Elector of Hanover strongly supported his ministers, and sent to Celle the following communication:

“That because, as is well known, it was decided after careful consideration of the facts to bring forward a suit on the charge of desertion, that the honour and high reputation of the Electoral Prince and the Princess herself and their children might be guarded, and also of that of our most gracious selves, their parents, so the publication of the verdict is all the more unavoidable, as otherwise there would be every opportunity of interpreting the cause of the separation to the injury and prejudice of the persons just mentioned on both sides.”

And the argument went on to say that it would be equally prejudicial to the children. Thereupon Duke

George William gave way, and the Duchess of Celle was beaten.

This interlude also goes to prove that the verdict of the Divorce Court was already settled by the higher powers before the deputation from the judges went to Lauenau to admonish the Princess. The deputation consisted of two only, Judge Molan and the President Busche. Judge Molan entered upon his task in an earnest and honourable spirit. Busche, who was in the secret confidence of the ministers, contented himself with platitudes of the commonest order. Judge Molan, who was a worthy man, treated the Princess to a long dissertation on the duties of holy matrimony, quoting to her the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, vii. 10. Coming down from these heights, he proceeded to point out to her, as her attorney had already done, that, as the culpable party, she would not be permitted to make a second marriage, though the privilege would be allowed to the other side. He also reminded her of what her children would lose when deprived of their mother, and expatiated on the grandeur of the position which the Princess was abandoning. He suggested that the dispute should be reconsidered under the influence of fervent prayer, at which a minister of religion might assist. But his admonitions and his prayers made absolutely no impression on the Princess, who declared that she could better serve the Almighty by remaining alone, and she was thankful to have the opportunity of withdrawing from the world. She insisted that under no circumstances whatever would she return to the Court of Hanover, or to the Electoral Prince, her husband. In short she reaffirmed verbally and with emphasis the declaration she had already made in writing. It is true that she had no alternative, for everything had been settled before-

hand; but there is no reason to suppose that she was acting under compulsion, as all along she had retained a fixed desire to be free of Hanover at all costs. Yet, even so, the Divorce Court refused to be satisfied. They were conscious of the doubtful legality of the proceedings, and they were desirous of guarding their honour and saving appearances as far as possible. So the Princess had, for the third time, to sign a written declaration to the effect that:

“We adhere firmly to the resolution already expressed by us in writing, that our attorney shall not oppose anything further that may be urged against us, but shall adhere to our previous resolution, and strive to bring the matter to a speedy issue.”

The Divorce Court met again on December 1, and the Princess's reply and the report of the deputation were formally handed in. These papers were submitted to the Prince's attorney, and it was asked if His Highness persisted in his suit. Two days later the Prince's reply was handed in. The substance of it was as follows:

That His Highness had given this most important matter, with all the consequences it might entail, his most careful consideration. It was only with painful feelings he could decide to take this extreme course, and he had left no stone unturned to bring the Princess to a better frame of mind, and his father and father-in-law had also given themselves personally the greatest trouble about it. But as nothing had been effected by this means, and the issue proved that the Princess adhered to her resolution, and her purposed desertion had been quite clearly proved, the Prince felt bound to maintain the petition expressed in his suit.

The sword was now ready to fall, but at the eleventh hour the Duchess of Celle made one more effort on

behalf of her daughter. We find that Duke George William entered a request for a lightening of the intended verdict. He took exception to the demand of the Court of Hanover that the sentence of the court should expressly forbid the Princess to marry again, and so threatening was his tone that the judges began to hesitate about complying with the Hanoverian orders, and the verdict was postponed. In order to break down this opposition of the Duke of Celle, Vice-Chancellor Hugo, who held a brief for Hanover, drew up a long legal opinion for the direction of the Divorce Court, and sent it to Bernstorff at Celle for approval and return. This document is very interesting. The first part of the "opinion" deals wholly with legal matters; the second part, which considers the peculiar arguments of the case from the dynastic point of view of the Court of Hanover, may be quoted in full:

"1. The Princess has given evidence of wicked intentions, of her purposed flight from the country in secret, thereby bringing the House into everlasting shame and disgrace. It would not have been possible for this to occur, unless very bitter opponents who were interested in the ruin of the House had seized the opportunity to make use of her evil designs in their schemes.

"The House has been thereby cast into such disorder and danger as cannot be contemplated without a shudder. We must thank the kindness of Providence for having prevented it, and in addition consider what is to be expected in the future from a person who has ventured already on so desperate a scheme, and how extremely necessary it is to place not only practical, but legal, restraints upon her, which are best carried out by expressly forbidding her again to marry: there will thus be the less occasion for cavilling.

"2. The judges forming the deputation have reported how strongly the Princess desired the sentence of separation, and what joy she manifested on learning that it might soon be passed. It may be conjectured that if she had been of a good disposition she would have been deeply grieved at causing her own father so much pain, and bringing such injury on those who showered kindness and affection on her. She ought further to consider how she will fall from her high position. She ought also to show compassion for her children. But when a mother displays joy over her separation from her children, we may gather what is to be expected of her.¹

"It is known, that before she conceived these evil designs; she had on different occasions expressed a longing to be a marchioness of France (these are people of no particular worth) rather than Princess of Brunswick-Lüneburg, for then she would be able to amuse herself better, whereas she was at present as good as a prisoner. Such a disposition is easily concealed for a time, but difficult to overcome. What can we opine from so intense a craving for a separation except that her intention is to seek some such position as that she has already hoped for? And such a course is all the more to be expected of her should we not refuse her the right to marry again in the judicial verdict."

Köcher (in whose article in *Sybel's Historische Zeitschrift* this is quoted), goes on to say: "In place of the third and fourth arguments, which are crossed out in the copy before me, the following is interpolated in Hugo's handwriting: 'There are still more serious considerations, which, however, cannot be well discussed.' The

¹ But Sophie Dorothea thought she would be allowed to see her children occasionally after the divorce. She had no idea that her retirement involved perpetual imprisonment.

original words, however, which can be deciphered pretty clearly under the thick lines, are:

"3. She has an indulgent mother, who does not grasp the position of affairs, nor judge of them correctly, and who shows peculiarly little affection for this Electoral House.

"4. The Princess looks forward to a very large fortune from her mother. Her father also is not likely to forget her.

"5. [In short] We must be on our guard against the enemies of the House, and give them as little occasion as possible for gaining a hold on us.

"6. [To much the same effect, with arguments *ad Deum* thrown in.]"

The "opinion" concludes with an apostrophe to the judges:

"This most lofty House has placed its safety and dignity in your hands, my lord judges, confiding in your prudence. Your country and innocent people have exposed the dangers assailing them to you, and demand your aid for their security," etc., etc.

It was therefore mainly the fear of the influence of the Duchess of Celle, as well as doubt of the vacillating spirit of Duke George William, which made the Hanoverian government determined to bind the heiress of Celle as tightly as possible, and this document shows how anxious they were. For some days no answer was returned from Celle, and Hugo wrote two or three times, begging for a reply. It was the final duel between the Duchess of Celle and Bernstorff, with Duke George William between; and the Duchess got the worst of it, for, after considerable hesitation, the Duke gave way.

It is not possible to follow the exact order of the pro-

ceedings; but that the Duchess was beaten is obvious from the fact that on December 15 Thies handed in the final reply of the Princess, and as he repeated again the Princess's declaration we must conclude that an understanding had been arrived at. The verdict, which was delivered immediately, shows that the Princess's enemies had won. It runs as follows:

"In the matrimonial suit of the illustrious Prince George Louis, Electoral Prince of Hanover, against his consort, the illustrious Princess Sophie Dorothea, etc., we, constituted president and judges of the Matrimonial Court of the Electorate and Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, declare and pronounce judgment. After attempts have been tried and have failed to settle the matter amicably, and in accordance with the documents and verbal declarations of the Princess and other detailed circumstances, we agree that her continued denial of matrimonial duty and cohabitation is well founded, and consequently that it is to be considered as an intentional desertion. In consequence whereof we have considered sentence, and now declare the ties of matrimony to be entirely dissolved and annulled. Since in similar cases of desertion it has been permitted to the innocent party to re-marry, while the other is forbidden, the same judicial power will be exercised in the present instance in favour of His Serene Highness the Electoral Prince.

"(Published in the Consistorial Court of Hanover, December 28, 1694)."

This sentence was signed by the president and all the judges, and delivered to the Princess at Lauenau on December 31. The same day—the last day of that evil year—she formally signified her acceptance of the verdict.

The result of the trial was duly communicated to the

representatives of Hanover and Celle at foreign Courts, and from that time the Princess was politically dead. Her name was never mentioned in the Electoral Court of Hanover; it was struck out of the Church prayers, and expunged from official documents. Thrust out from the Hanoverian Court, she found her father's Court also closed to her, and she entered upon her long captivity of thirty-two years—a captivity from which death alone was to bring release.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PRISONER OF AHLDEN

Oh! give me liberty—
For were ev'n Paradise my prison,
Still I should long to leap the crystal walls.

DRYDEN.

FOR more than a year after the divorce the Princess was detained at Lauenau, in the Principality of Hanover, despite the stipulation Duke George William had made that, when the trial was ended, his daughter should be sent back to his keeping in the territory of Celle. Various reasons caused this delay, which amounted to a breach of contract, the chief being the fear that the Duke of Celle would relent towards his daughter.

So far, the Hanoverian government had won all along the line. They had got rid of the Princess and had kept her property, and they were determined that nothing should upset so admirable an arrangement for them. It was known that the Duchess of Celle was moving heaven and earth on behalf of the unhappy Princess (nor did she cease her efforts as long as she lived), and it was feared that if she and Sophie Dorothea came together the Duke might be persuaded into seeing his daughter, and then all would be undone. Moreover, there was a strong party at Celle, including many persons of rank and

influence, who loudly declared that their Princess had been hardly and unfairly treated, and they were ready to promote an agitation in her favour and to question the legality of her divorce, certainly of her imprisonment. Popular demonstrations at Celle were things to be avoided by those who desired the union of the Duchies, and it was determined to keep the Princess locked up in Hanover territory until the excitement had cooled down.

The behaviour of the Elector and Electress and all the Electoral family, throughout this unhappy affair, was callous in the extreme. It would only have been seemly if, after a painful family scandal such as this, the Electoral Court had gone into retirement for a time; but the annual carnival and festivities took place at Hanover as if nothing had happened. Nor did the death of Queen Mary II. of England, though it put the Electoral Court into mourning and advanced the Electress Sophia one step nearer the English throne, make any difference to the pleasure-loving Hanoverians.¹

The solitary confinement of the Princess at Lauenau gave her ample time for reflection, and she gradually awoke to a sense of her position. The murder of her lover had stunned her for a time, and her passionate grief at his loss had almost robbed her of reason. The desire to break absolutely with Hanover, where she had suffered so much misery and insult, amounted to a mania, and this, added to the fact that "everything was known," had led her into acquiescence with anything and everything that had been proposed to her. She now began to see that she had been betrayed into forfeiting her interests, and had consented to a divorce, and the

¹ "The Carnival here is very provoking, but they cannot live without it; they are a sort of people that can rejoice even in their own disgraces." Cresset's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 11, 1695.

surrender of her property and rank, without insisting upon adequate guarantees. She, all along, had been given to understand by her attorney and the ministers who visited her that, when once the divorce was accomplished, she would be free, allowed to return to the territory of Celle, and given an establishment where she could live in retirement, which was all she now desired. Her father's anger, she hoped, would be mollified by her submission; but her hope turned out to be vain. That she would be shut out from his Court, kept a strict prisoner, and forbidden to even see her mother did not enter her mind. Too late she saw that she had been entrapped into a false position.

There is no doubt that this harsh treatment of Sophie Dorothea was thoroughly approved by the Electress Sophia (if, indeed, it was not in some respects instigated by her), who in this connexion appears in a most unamiable light. Knowing what manner of man her son was, she might have made some allowance for his unhappy young wife; but she had no feeling for her save hatred and contempt. Her letters to her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans, at this period are missing (they have evidently been purposely destroyed); but the letters of the Duchess to the Electress are still extant, and have been published. They are, for the most part, replies to her aunt's letters, and are an echo of the hatred with which the Electress Sophia pursued the disgraced daughter of the d'Olbreuse. Elizabeth Charlotte calls the Princess "a miserable creature, who deserves every misfortune"; she denounces her "wicked tongue," and describes her as "a person as malicious as she is frivolous," her frivolity being an inheritance from her French mother, whose bad training of her daughter was the fount of all her misfortunes.

Incredible though it may seem, both the Electress and her niece took the part of the Countess Platen, and defended her against the defamatory rumours that were flying about. The part the Countess had played in the murder of Königsmarck and the consequent ruin of the Princess were matters of common gossip at every Court of Europe, and her conduct universally reprobated. King Louis questioned Elizabeth Charlotte about it at table at Versailles; but the Duchess denied everything, and writes to her aunt that she told the King: "So far as concerns Countess Platen, I believe, from what I have heard of the Princess and from my own knowledge of the Countess, that the former is a much more evil-minded person than the latter, whom I believe to be a very good sort of person."

Again we find the Duchess d'Orleans writing:

"There is no likelihood that the Countess Platen would have degraded herself with so young a man as Königsmarck. I am much more inclined to believe that she flattered him in the hope of making a match between him and her daughter, for he was a good catch. It may be, however, that Königsmarck wished, from motives of vanity, to make the former think that all women were in love with him, in order that his society might be the more acceptable to her, for all young fellows are generally vain; and when the Princess afterwards found herself betrayed, she imagined that the Countess was the cause of it. I am sorry for the Countess, who it seems has taken the matter so much to heart that she has got ill. Such slanders, when not true, should be simply despised and laughed at, and not taken seriously. It is miserable to see oneself so badly treated by the very persons whom one imagined held one dear, and I am not surprised that the Countess has taken it to heart."

The Countess Platen was ill not only in body, but in mind. Her reputation had suffered a severe blow, and, despite the protection of the Elector and the ægis of the Electress, a number of personages about the Court looked coldly upon her. Both Königsmarck and the Princess were popular, and many official people among the Hanoverian nobility shunned the woman whom they believed to have been the cause of the death of the one and the ruin of the other, while at Celle her name was held in execration. All this served to enrage the Countess the more against the imprisoned Princess, and she did all she could to prevent any mitigation of her punishment. In this she was supported by the Electress Sophia. Schaumann indeed holds the Electress primarily responsible for all the Princess's troubles, and declares that: "The presence of the Princess Sophie Dorothea in Hanover was from the first impossible and untenable on account of the unquenchable hatred and scorn which the Electress Sophia, her mother-in-law, evinced towards her." We have seen that the Electress Sophia was capable of dissembling this hatred and of acting with outward consideration to her daughter-in-law; but the moment she caught her tripping, all her latent enmity blazed forth, and she rejoiced to see the Hanoverian Court rid of the daughter of her hated rival. The Princess had fallen through her own folly, and now was the time to trample on her. To the hatred of these two women, the wife and the mistress of the Elector, must be attributed many of the rigours of Sophie Dorothea's imprisonment, and her detention at Lauenau.

At last, owing to the persistent efforts of the Duchess of Celle, who was never tired of pointing out to her husband the breach of contract involved in the Elector's keeping the Princess so long in Hanoverian territory, the

captive was removed from Lauenau to Ahlden, where she had been confined for some weeks prior to the divorce.¹

On February 28, 1695, the Princess left Lauenau and returned under strong escort to the Castle of Ahlden, which had meantime been prepared for her reception. According to the arrangement arrived at between the two brothers at Engesen, on her arrival there she was formally given the rank and title of "Duchess of Ahlden," and was accorded a suite of attendants, a military escort of cavalry and infantry, and a governor of the castle. There was yielded to her an outward semblance of honour; but in reality the title was a blind to conceal her real position from the world, the suite were spies, the escort and the governor her gaolers.

Except for one brief interlude of a few months' duration, Ahlden was henceforth the Princess' residence and prison to the day of her death—more than thirty years later. A description of the place may therefore be of interest. With a view to writing this book, I visited Ahlden on September 10, 1898, and made the following notes the evening of the same day:

"It was not without difficulty that I discovered Schloss Ahlden was still in existence; many people in Hanover had never heard of it. I, at last, found that there was a village of Ahlden, with a magistrate's house still standing, near the country town of Walsrode, some twenty miles from Hanover; and the nearest station was Reitlagen. Acting on this information, a friend and myself set out from Hanover at 7 a. m. by the local train to Reitlagen. At that early hour we were almost the only

¹ "The unlucky Princess is still in this country and they talk of removing her suddenly into her father's territory."—Knatchbull's (secretary to Cresset) *Despatch*, Hanover, February 22, 1695.

passengers, and the plain, over which the single line of railway ran, was enveloped in a thick mist. We travelled very slowly, stopping every few minutes at some little wayside station. A bell was fixed to the engine to warn stray cattle off the line, and as we went through the fog it tolled like a funeral knell. By-and-by the mist began to lift, and we saw we were traversing a flat, marshy country. There were reeds, thistles, flags and rushes in the grass fields, and a good deal of common land on which nothing but scrub and brushwood seemed to grow. About 9 o'clock the train pulled up at the little station of Reitlagen. Here we found a conveyance to take us to Ahlden, which was said to be some five miles distant; it proved to be much nearer.

"By this time the mists had lifted, the sun was shining brilliantly. As we drove along the dusty road, bordered by poplars and limes, we passed a cottage or two with gardens full of plum-trees laden with purple fruit, and every now and then a patch of yellow lupin. The land was for the most part rough pasture, and the country reminded me of the fen districts of Cambridgeshire, and a windmill and a flight of plover served to strengthen the resemblance. We drove across the Aller, which shone like steel under the cloudless sky, and then suddenly, long before we anticipated, we saw a red roof peeping out among the trees on the south bank of the river, and the driver pointed with his whip and said, 'There is Schloss Ahlden.' In the distance the castle looked like a fair-sized English manor-house, but on closer inspection it proved to be something different. The moat had long since been filled up, and the draw-bridge yielded place to a short avenue of limes; but the square entrance-gateway still remained, and externally the castle was little changed.

“Above the gateway was the date of the building of the castle—1613—and an elaborate coat-of-arms, carved in stone, supported by figures of Piety and Justice. The irony of it! There was little of either piety or justice in the treatment meted out to the hapless captive who gave the castle its sole title to fame. There was also an inscription to show that it was erected by Duke Christian of Brunswick-Lüneburg as the magistrate’s house of the district.

“Passing under the arched gateway, rudely painted with frescoes, we found ourselves in a grassgrown quadrangle: one wing only, the left as we entered, had been inhabited by the Princess Sophie Dorothea.

“Entering the doorway in the centre of the wing, we mounted a wooden staircase, traversed a corridor with a rough floor and whitewashed wall, and presently found ourselves in the Princess’s apartments. They consisted of a bedroom and sitting-room of moderate size, say twenty-two feet by sixteen, leading from one another, with a bare ceiling and wooden floor. The rooms were destitute of furniture, and we were told that they had never been used since the Princess died in them. The sleeping-room had two windows, looking over the garden towards the village, and an alcove for the bed. The sitting-room had two windows also, looking across the Aller over the marsh land. Beyond these apartments was a larger room, now partitioned, which had served as a dining-hall for the suite and attendants. The Princess was permitted, if she wished, to dine with her household, sitting at the head of the table. The rest of the wing was occupied by her suite.

“Another side of the quadrangle was the magistrate’s house, then inhabited by the Governor; a third served as barracks for the military guard; and the fourth as

outhouses and stables. In reality the Princess had for her own personal use only two small rooms, and the whole building was no larger than a moderate-sized English country-house. Even as we saw it on a bright September morning it was indescribably dreary: in the winter, with the mists and floods, it must be a veritable 'House on the Marsh,' and to the poor prisoner who wore her life out there, it must have seemed a Castle of Despair.

"The castle is in tolerable repair, and is still used as the magistrate's house of the district, and justice is dispensed there at stated times. The magistrate no longer resides there. It is in charge of a castellan, who is also a farmer and carpenter in the village. We found this official courteous and willing to give us any information he possessed, which unfortunately was not much.

"There are absolutely no relics of the Princess remaining at Ahlden, for the Hanoverian government, after her death, did everything to stamp out her name and her memory. Her picture, which hung in the castle for many years, was sent to Herrenhausen. Only fifteen years ago two large boxes of papers at Ahlden, said to have belonged to her, were ordered sent to Hanover. They were put on a cart, to be dispatched from Reitlagen by train, but on the way to the station they mysteriously disappeared. Whether they dropped out of the cart, or whether they were stolen none can say; they have not been heard of from that day until now. We were told this by the castellan, who assumed an air of mystery on this and other matters. He pointed out to us the window from which the unfortunate Princess was said to gaze with wistful eyes for hours together across the marsh, looking for the deliverance that never came. Year in and year out, for thirty years and more she would

gaze from this window, while youth went by and middle age went by and old age crept on, until one November morning she was seen no more.

“From the castle we walked down the village street to the little Lutheran Church—a plain, ugly building, part of which is ancient, but most of it built during Sophie Dorothea’s residence at Ahlden. We saw the organ which the Princess gave to the church, which bears the inscription—

PRESENTED BY H.S.H. THE DUCHESS SOPHIE DOROTHEA,
1721;

and we were pointed out the place where she was said to have occupied when she attended divine worship, a wooden pew in the second gallery. Most authorities say that she was never permitted to enter the church, and a minister attended her in the castle; but local tradition contradicts this statement, the truth probably being that at first she was not permitted, but when the stringency of her prison rules was relaxed a little she was allowed to attend public worship. It is said that she was conducted to and from the church, only a few yards from the castle gate, by an escort. She was not allowed to walk about the village, only in the castle garden, which is very small, hardly larger than a prison yard, and bounded on one side by the Aller, and on the other by the moat and marsh. She was permitted to drive a distance of six miles from the castle, along a certain road to the west. There is a stone bridge on the way to Hayden which marked the six miles’ limit of the drive. The Princess was never allowed to cross this bridge, nor could she drive along any other road but this. Thus far and no farther could she go; this way and none other for thirty years. How tired she must have got of it! When the weather was fine she drove herself in a cabriolet, an

when it was cold, or wet, she was driven in a closed carriage. She was always accompanied by a lady-in-waiting and a guard of soldiers. She was fond of driving very fast, and would tear furiously up and down the road, which she would traverse many times.

"Local tradition among the peasants of Ahlden still hands down the picture of the mysterious great lady of the castle, always beautifully dressed, and with diamonds gleaming in her dark hair, galloping up and down the road, followed by an escort of cavalry with drawn swords.

"The village of Ahlden has to-day some thousand inhabitants. The oak trees and red-tiled roofs give it the appearance of a Hampshire village, but the country around is like Norfolk at its flattest and dreariest. The village is made up of three or four irregular streets, two or three beerhouses, and a large school. The memory of the 'Duchess of Ahlden' still lingers among the village folk; they sell postcards with her portrait on them, and speak with pity of her fate.

"Certain authorities at Hanover warned me that I should find absolutely nothing at Ahlden and my visit would be a waste of time. On the contrary, I found the place full of interest and rich in tradition. Without seeing Ahlden it is impossible to realise the utter loneliness of this poor lady's thirty-two years of confinement there."

There were three governors at Ahlden during the years of the Princess's captivity. The first, the Seigneur de la Fortière, a noble of Celle, until 1702; then Charles Augustus von Bothmer, a Hanoverian noble, from 1702 to 1721; and Sigismund, Count Bergest, from 1721 to 1726, the year of her death. A certain George von Busche, a relative of the President of the Divorce Court, held office in her household, but not as governor; also a

Herr von Marlortie,—they were probably gentlemen-in-waiting. Among her ladies-in-waiting we have the names of Madame von Ilten, Madame von Marlortie, and Madame von Arenswald.

When the Princess had settled down at Ahlden certain concessions were granted to her to support the theory of her being duchess of the place. She was allowed, through an agent or deputy, the administration of her property and of the Ahlden territory. This extended for several miles, and included the towns of Retham and Walsrode and certain custom-house stations on the Weser and Aller. She was also given the nominal management of her household, which was fairly numerous. It consisted of one or two ladies-in-waiting, one or two gentlemen-in-waiting, and two pages. Among the domestics were two valets, fourteen footmen, twelve female servants, three cooks, a confectioner and baker, and a butler. There were also the Governor of the castle and the escort of forty soldiers, cavalry and infantry.

As time went on the Princess grew interested in the management of her property and household, and these things helped to pass many of her weary hours. She also took the poor of the village under her care, and did what she could to help them, though she was not permitted to enter their cottages. She interested herself in the village schools, and the children used to come to her on their *fête* days and receive from her hands prizes and little gifts. Her name became a household word round the country-side for kindness and benevolence, and for works of pity and mercy. As Duchess of Ahlden she was permitted some little state: she held a small *levée* on certain days, at which the local magnates, clergy and nobility, with their wives, were wont to attend; but

visitors were limited strictly to people who lived within her territory of Ahlden; and the Governor of the castle and the ladies- and gentlemen-in-waiting were always present at these receptions. She was not permitted to return these visits.

The Princess was scrupulous in the observance of religious duties; she restored the church and enriched it by various gifts. The Parish minister acted as her chaplain, and read prayers daily to the garrison and household in the large dining-room aforesaid. The Princess and her ladies listened in a room adjoining, the door being left ajar. Her titular rank was always outwardly respected, but she was subjected to any number of petty and insulting restrictions. She was never allowed to leave the castle at night under any circumstances whatever; her letters were supervised, and every letter which came in and went out of the castle was read. Despite this, she carried on an active correspondence with her mother and acquaintances, which gradually increased in volume. Her great grievance during these early years at Ahlden was that she was not permitted to see her mother. The Duchess of Celle persistently endeavoured to break through this rule, but the Hanoverian government made such strong representations to the Duke of Celle of the evils that would follow, that, despite her tears and entreaties, she could not gain permission. Even if the Duke had wished to intervene, which may be doubted, Bernstorff was always on the alert to counteract the influence of the Duchess. It was known that Duke Antony Ulrich was in communication with the Duchess, and warmly championed the cause of the imprisoned Princess, and the Hanoverian government feared, or pretended to fear, that a new intrigue would be set on foot against them, and perhaps a new attempt at flight.

The Princess, therefore, though treated with every outward semblance of respect, remained a prisoner. At first she was not allowed outside the castle gates; but her health suffering from the confinement, she was granted another concession and permitted to take her daily drives. Count Schulenburg-Klosterode, in his *Herzogin von Ahlden* quotes the following words taken from the mouth of an old woman of Ahlden named Marie Ratze, about the year 1800. This old woman was then ninety-six years of age, had worked in the Princess's apartments as chambermaid, and remembered her well. She says: "The Princess was of middle height and rather stout, and during the first years of her sojourn at Ahlden was exceedingly beautiful. Her hair was jet black, and the diamonds, which she never forgot to put in her hair when she went out for her airings, shone with great brilliancy." Thus we see how a generation or two spans the intervening centuries.

Sophie Dorothea had inherited from her mother the Frenchwoman's love of dress, and all through the years of her imprisonment she took pleasure in devising and wearing elaborate toilettes, and in decking herself with jewels, though there was no one to see them but her little household and the few local magnates round about. This would go to prove that her thoughts were not so detached from the world as some of her chroniclers untruly assert. On the contrary, from the beginning of her imprisonment to the day of her death, she took a keen interest in all that was going on in the world outside, and kept herself remarkably well informed of contemporary events not only in Hanover and Celle, but in England and the Courts of Europe. Yet all the while she was politically dead, and, her father being set against her and her mother powerless, the only way she could

hope to recover her position was through her children; but her piteous appeals and oft-repeated prayers to be allowed to see them were always refused, nor was she permitted to carry on an open correspondence with them, though later she was able to smuggle communications through secretly.

When at last the Princess realised, in her solitary Ahlden, that though granted an allowance and a separate establishment on her father's territory as stipulated, it was the intention of her enemies to keep her a prisoner, perhaps for life, she saw too late the trap into which she had fallen, and she continually petitioned the Elector Ernest Augustus for her freedom; nor did she cease to struggle for liberty till the day of her death. In the early part of her captivity she was pacified by being told that she would probably get what she wanted by quietly submitting to the will of the Elector for a time, and she was reminded that he had always been as indulgent towards her as circumstances would allow. She acted on this hint and submitted to the very letter of the law, however much she rebelled against it in spirit. So far did she carry this submission, that one night when a fire broke out in her wing of the castle, which she was forbidden to leave after sunset on any pretext whatever, she was seen pacing up and down the corridor almost frantic with terror, her jewel-box under her arm, yet refusing to quit the wing, in spite of the encroaching flames, without a signed order from the Governor. She was assured that her good behaviour would bring its reward.

Thus passed the first three years of the Princess's captivity at Ahlden—three years of hope deferred. Even her mother counselled patience, and wrote that things were working in her favour, when suddenly their hopes

were dashed to the ground by the death of the Elector Ernest Augustus, which took place in January, 1698. Ernest Augustus had been suffering from ill-health for years, and his death was not altogether unexpected. He was an able ruler and an astute politician, and under his rule Hanover grew and prospered, and was raised from the obscurity of a dukedom to the dignity of an electorate. His failings were a lack of straightforwardness, a love of display, and allowing himself to be ruled by mistresses, notably by the notorious Countess Platen. But his Court was brilliant, he was good-natured and open-handed to a fault, and his subjects infinitely preferred him to the sullen and niggardly ruler who succeeded. But George Louis, now the Elector George, was strong where his father was weak, and from the first he made it clear that he would have no petticoat interference in politics. He retained Count Platen nominally as his Prime Minister, but he took the management of affairs into his own hands. He gave the Countess Platen to understand that her day was over, and the ex-mistress retired in dudgeon to Monplaisir, and there, suffering torments from disease, she dragged out the remaining years of her infamous life.

Another and more illustrious lady also found her position much impaired by the Elector's death. This was none other than the Electress Sophia, who during the last few years had been steadily gaining power and influence. The Elector George disliked his mother, who had opposed him in the primogeniture, and would not suffer from her the slightest interference in State affairs. He relegated her to Herrenhausen, gave her a mean allowance, and even neglected to pay her the proper honour and respect to which she was entitled as his mother and as Electress-Dowager, and

which her age, rank, and high character undoubtedly demanded. The proud spirit of the old Electress felt these slights keenly, but she was too wise to resent them openly, and she betook herself once more to the consolations of philosophy and to watching her prospects in England, which, since the birth of Anne's son, the little Duke of Gloucester, had not been of the rosiest. Even here she was molested by her son, who persistently meddled in her English schemes. But one consolation at least was hers—the daughter of “the little clot of dirt” would never take precedence of her as Electress at the Hanoverian Court, and Sophia determined that nothing she could do should be left undone to keep her daughter-in-law safely shut up in Ahlden.

The Elector George, though he differed from his mother in most things, was at one with her as to this. He knew the divorce was of doubtful legality and might any day be upset by a revision, so he confirmed it by declaring his resolve to act strictly upon the letter of the agreement signed by his father and the Duke of Celle: he would not permit his wife to assume the title of Electress, and he reaffirmed the order that she was always to be styled the Duchess of Ahlden. Thus her husband's accession to the Electoral dignity made no difference to the rank and position of Sophie Dorothea, but it made a great deal of difference to her chances of freedom. The new Elector hated his cast-off wife with sullen vindictiveness, whereas the old Elector had only been harsh to her from motives of policy, and because he was instigated by her enemies. The Elector George determined from the first to maintain the existing arrangement—a very convenient one for him, and he had no desire to see his wife back again. He was happy in the society of his Ermengarda Melusina, whose temper was always equa-

ble, who meddled not in politics, and who only thought of enriching herself. He also found variety in the society of the other mistresses whom he added from time to time to his unattractive harem.

Four years of captivity (one at Lauenau and three at Ahlden) had now brought Sophie Dorothea to a more reasonable frame of mind. She regretted bitterly her lost freedom, and she was now as eager to return to the world as she had once been to retire from it. So anxious was she to see her children, that she was willing for their sake to humble herself to her enemies. She was not always quite consistent. When the tidings of the death of Ernest Augustus reached her, probably urged by her mother, she wrote the following letters, which are still preserved in the Hanoverian Archives:

“AHLDEN, *January 29, 1698.*

“*To the Elector George Louis.*

“MONSIEUR,—I have the honour to write to Your Highness to assure you that I take a real share in your grief at the death of the Elector your father, and I pray God that He may console you, that He may bless your reign with His most precious favours, and that He may console Your Highness with every form of prosperity. These are prayers that I shall make every day of my life for you, and I shall always regret having displeased you. I beg you to grant me pardon for my past faults, as I still entreat you herewith on my knees with all my heart. My sorrow for them is so keen and so bitter that I cannot express it. The sincerity of my repentance should obtain pardon from Your Highness; and if to crown your favour you would permit me to see and embrace our children, my gratitude for such longed-for favours would be infinite, as I desire nothing so earnestly as this, and I should

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be content to die afterwards. I send a thousand prayers for your preservation and good health, and am,

“Submissively and respectfully, Monsieur,

“Your Highness’s most humble and obedient servant,

“SOPHIE DOROTHEA.”

“AHLDEN, *January 29, 1698.*

“*To the Electress Sophia.*

“MADAME—It is my duty as well as my pleasure to assure Your Highness that there is no one who takes more share than I do in your grief at the death of the Elector your consort. I pray God with all my heart, Madame, that He will console you and keep you for many years to come in all prosperity and good health. I beg of you once again to pardon me for everything that I have done to incur your displeasure and to take some interest in me with the Elector your son. I implore you to grant me the pardon that I so earnestly long for and to permit me to embrace my children. And I long also to kiss Your Highness’s hands before I die. If you would grant me this favour I should be filled with gratitude. I beg you to do me the honour to believe that nothing equals the infinite respect with which I remain, Madame,

“Your Highness’s most humble and obedient servant,

“SOPHIE DOROTHEA.”

No reply was vouchsafed to these piteous appeals. The Sullen Elector never mentioned his wife’s name, and the Electress Sophia dismissed the prayer with angry scorn. Seeing that no hope was to be expected from that quarter, the Princess wrote to her mother, and besought her to seize the opportunity afforded by the change of government to effect some amelioration of her unhappy

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lot, or at least to prevent it from becoming harder. The Duchess of Celle made strong representations to the Duke, and earnestly pleaded that their child might no longer be kept in imprisonment. But the Duke could do nothing of himself, even if he would, as it would involve a breach of the agreement arrived at four years ago with the Hanoverian government; yet he relented so far as to give his wife permission to go and see her daughter at Ahlden, and the new Elector, who had his own reasons for wishing to be on good terms with his uncle, did not venture to do more than protest. A good deal of capital has been made out of the fact that the Elector George gave the Duchess of Celle leave to visit her daughter, but in reality his permission was not asked; the Duke of Celle granted it on his own initiative, and the order was never afterwards revoked. All the other mitigations of the Princess's lot were effected before the old Elector's death. Backed by the Electress Sophia, the new Elector flatly refused to grant his wife the slightest indulgence.

We may imagine with what joy the imprisoned Princess hailed her mother's visits. After four long years they met again, and were able to exchange confidences and take counsel together. But it was too late to effect much. The Duchess had lost all political power and the Princess's imprisonment had now become an accepted fact; nothing they could say, and nothing they could do, availed against the vindictive hatred of the Court of Hanover.

Shortly after this concession Sophie Dorothea's heart was rejoiced by the news of the escape of her faithful friend, Elèonore Knesebeck, from the fortress of Schwartzfels, where she had been confined the last four years. Knesebeck's escape was little short of miraculous. For a long time no one knew where she was imprisoned,

and her disappearance seemed almost as mysterious as Königsmarck's; but at last her sister at Brunswick, Frau von Maitsch, received intelligence that she was a prisoner at Schwartzfels, and set on foot a plan for her release. The poor Knesebeck had been made to suffer great hardships. She was imprisoned in one small cell in the tumble-down fortress, which she was never permitted to leave, given the coarsest food, and was waited on by one old woman. At last the roof of her prison partly gave way, and a tiler was instructed to repair it. This tiler turned out to be a friend in disguise, and one night he let down a rope, which Knesebeck tied round her waist; she was then pulled up through the hole in the roof and lowered down the prison walls. She had a long drop, for the rope was too short; but she managed to regain her feet, and fled with all speed to Wolfenbüttel, where she received a warm welcome.

Her first steps were to petition for the restitution of her property and bear testimony again to the innocence of herself and her mistress. The Hanoverian government were much perturbed by the escape of their prisoner, and gave orders that the Princess at Ahlden was to be watched more strictly than ever. Inquiries were made at Schwartzfels to discover how Knesebeck had escaped, and her vacant cell was carefully searched. It was found that the unfortunate Fräulein had passed her days in writing with charcoal on the whitewashed walls of her prison, her blessings and curses, complaints and consolations. These writings were copied for the Hanoverian Privy Council and form very quaint reading; they are still preserved in the Archives at Hanover. We have first of all inventories of the confiscate property of the imprisoned lady, for which she afterwards put in a claim, and then a large number of utterances as to her

wrongs, and asking to know why she was imprisoned. "I imagine," she says, "it is on account of the Princess. The Hanoverian government must have committed a great wrong, as they want to stop my mouth; for if they can be responsible to the whole world for what they have done to the Princess, may I not speak too? If she be rightly judged, how should I dare to speak untruthfully—I, a poor, miserable girl—against an Elector? If he be acting justly, how could I speak wrongfully? Is he not powerful enough to repress a thousand girls like me? What is the meaning of the Government stopping my mouth? what are they afraid of my saying? It is clear from this they must have committed a great injustice, and so they choke and repress me with force that their injustice may not be brought to light." She repeatedly laid stress on the fact that four crimes were laid to her charge. "I am so important in the eyes of the Hanoverian councillors that they have broken the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Commandments on my account: the Fifth in that they try to kill my body and soul by cruelty; the Seventh by kidnapping me; the Eighth by laying four false crimes to my charge; and the Ninth by stealing my property." But neither her prayers in prison, nor her clamourings when out of it, induced the Hanoverian government to make her any restitution, though the Duchess of Celle helped her all in her power, and she found a warm champion in Duke Antony Ulrich. She lived for several years at Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel, and was later taken into the service of Sophie Dorothea's daughter, the Queen of Prussia. She never married, and died as she had lived, protesting her mistress's innocence and her own.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FLIGHT OF YEARS

(1698—1714)

The moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

OMAR KHAYYAM.

THE next few years brought no further relief to the prisoner of Ahlden, though the Duchess of Celle was regular in her visits and did everything to carry consolation to the captive. Sophie Dorothea had frequent news of her children, for they were often at Celle, and their grandmother Eléonore did not fail to impress them with a sense of their mother's wrongs. It seems their secret sympathies were with their imprisoned mother, whom they were never permitted to see, nor at Hanover even to mention her name. Duke George William was extravagantly fond of his grandson George Augustus, and often took him with him on his hunting expeditions. The Old Duke gave the boy much good advice, which young George sometimes forgot to follow; but he always remembered his grandfather with affection and respect.

Many years later, when he was George II. of England, babbling reminiscences by the bedside of his dying consort Caroline, Lord Hervey relates that, "he said that the

Duke of Zelle was fond of him, but had often told him, as well as he loved him, if he ever found him guilty of a base action, and that he should prove a liar or a coward, he would shoot him through the head with his own hand." ¹

George Augustus must have been a lovable youth, and his early portraits show him to have been very like his mother, especially in his large, almond-shaped eyes. About this time he made a determined effort to see his mother. The story goes that one day when he was hunting in the woods near Luisburg, he stole away from the rest of the party, and, laying spurs to his horse, rode at full speed in the direction of Ahlden. His suite, missing the Prince and guessing his intention, gave pursuit, and eventually caught him up in a wood near Reitlagen, some four miles from the castle. Another version says that the Prince managed to get as far as Ahlden, and actually beheld his mother, who waved to him from the window. The Governor of the castle refused him admission, and he then sought to gain an entrance by swimming across the Aller. In either case his suite followed him, and, on his refusing to return, conducted the Prince back to Hanover under compulsion.

His escapade was visited by the Elector's heavy displeasure, and the young George's partisanship of his mother was probably the beginning of bad blood between father and son, for they were frequently quarrelling, and came to hate one another with an intense hatred. "*Il est fougeux, mais il a du cœur*," said the Elector George once of his son, and certainly his effort to see his mother would seem to bear out his father's estimate of his character.

In April, 1700, events took a turn, which, under

¹ Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*, vol. ii.

favourable circumstances, might have resulted in the Princess's liberty, and actually gained her the one respite in her thirty-two years' captivity. The fall of the Principality of Ahlfeld, and the nearness of the French troops to Ahlden, gave the Duchess of Celle the opportunity she was longing for, and she implored her husband to bring the Princess to Celle, where she would be out of danger. It was a pretext merely, for there was no real danger, and even if there had been, Sophie Dorothea would doubtless have been glad for the French to have broken into her prison house and have taken her as a captive of war. It would at least have varied the monotony of her existence, and the change might have been for the better; it could hardly have been for the worse.

Despite difficulties raised by Bernstorff and the Elector George, George William was prevailed upon to grant his wife's prayer; but he had to stipulate that his daughter should be confined to one wing of the Castle of Celle, and he refused to see her. So one April day the gates of Ahlden were thrown open, and the Princess was escorted over the moorland to Celle. Every care was taken to prevent a popular demonstration. She arrived in the dead of the night, and was conducted at once to her apartments in the old part of the Schloss, which she had occupied as a child and during her unhappy married life on her visits to her parents. Here the Princess remained for nearly a year, a prisoner in her father's house, studiously avoiding any breach of the rules laid down, and seeking by good behaviour to soften the hearts of her gaolers. The possibility of any danger from the French soon passed away. Still the Princess lingered at Celle, and though orders came from Hanover that she was to be sent back to Ahlden they were not obeyed. The Duchess intervened, and sometimes on the plea of ill-

health and sometimes on other pretexts she kept her daughter with her.

At last, however, the pressure from Hanover was so strong that the Princess was forced to leave Celle without having spoken to her father, though she had been nearly a year under his roof. She returned to Ahlden, and her one golden chance of liberty was gone forever. The good folk of Celle were loud in favour of their beloved Princess, and got up noisy demonstrations; but all to no purpose. Nothing availed against the pitiless hatred of the Elector George and the Electress Sophia.

The following extracts from letters written by the Duchess d'Orleans to the Electress Sophia bear upon this incident:

July 29, 1700.—"The Duchess of Celle has lost no time in having her daughter brought to Celle. I should think that her father must be very much embarrassed about the matter, for it will grieve him to send his daughter away again without seeing her, and yet the honour of the House does not permit him to let her remain at Celle, and there is the fear that the Elector would take it ill."

August 8, 1700.—"I should like to know if the Elector will allow the Duchess of Ahlden to remain at Celle or if he will send her back to Ahlden again. I hear that the Princess leads a very solitary life, but all the same she is splendidly dressed, and when she takes a walk on the ramparts at Celle she always covers her face with a veil. I fancy she hopes to touch the heart of her husband by her decorous life, so that he may take her as his wife again."

August 26, 1700.—"I hear that the Duchess of Celle has received orders to send her daughter back to Ahlden, but they have not been carried out. The people of Celle are not to be blamed for lamenting on account of

their Princess, but her father deserves praise for exhibiting such firmness."

While the Princess was at Celle an event occurred in England pregnant with consequences to the future of the House of Hanover, and it might perhaps have contributed indirectly to the Elector's determination to send his wife back to Ahlden. The heir-presumptive to the Throne of England, Anne's sickly little son, the Duke of Gloucester, died in July, 1700. Henceforth, for practical politics, the succession lay between the direct line of the exiled and Roman Catholic House of Stuart, and the remote line of the Protestant House of Hanover.¹ The Hanoverian succession was viewed with little favour in England, at best it was a last resort; but the failing health of King William, the impossibility of Anne having any more children, and the determination not to restore a Roman Catholic to the throne, made it imperative that the nation should do something to settle the succession. In the autumn of 1700 the Electress Sophia, accompanied by her daughter the Electress of Brandenburg, paid a visit to King William at Loo. The ostensible reason of the Electress's visit was to gain his aid in elevating the Electorate of Brandenburg to the kingdom of Prussia (which took place a little later); but of course English people saw in it a move in the direction of Sophia's succession to the throne of England. The Electress seems to have felt, as every one felt then, that

¹ The next in blood, after the children of James II., was the Duchess of Savoy, daughter of Henrietta, Duchess d'Orleans (a daughter of Charles I.), and then the family of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia (daughter of James I.); but all these, save the Electress Sophia, were Roman Catholics. It is interesting to note that the lineal descendant of Charles I., through the Duchess of Savoy, is Mary, Consort of the present Prince Regent of Bavaria.

events were working in favour of the royal exiles at St. Germain; but King William, who hated Anne more than all the exiled House of Stuart put together, urged the Electress Sophia to assert herself in some way in opposition to the Princess Anne. The wily old lady discreetly declined, and even suggested that the King should come to terms with the expatriated Prince of Wales. She would not stand in her own light, but short of that she was a Jacobite. Her suggestion had the effect of enraging William. He turned his back on her and left for England the next day. So the Electress had to return crestfallen to Hanover.

Nevertheless William, on thinking the matter over, acted upon Sophia's hint, and, inspired by his hatred of Anne, made a formal offer to King James to adopt the young Prince of Wales, bring him over to England, and make him his successor. This policy was only possible if the Prince would change his religion; but even if he had been willing to do so, which he was not, it had no chance. The offer was rejected with scorn by King James. He would make no terms with the usurper. Stung by this contemptuous rejection, William once more took up the wild idea of making the Electress Sophia his successor to the exclusion of his detested sister-in-law Anne; but the old Electress knew that she had no chance against Anne, and was far too astute to listen to any such proposal. If it were only a question of Anne's life, Sophia, or her son, would not have long to wait, for Anne's health was notoriously bad, and her life was worth little more than William's. Foiled in this direction, the King had no alternative but to push on the Act of Parliament which settled the succession of the Crown of England on the Electress Sophia and the heirs of her body, *being Protestants*, after the death of himself

and of Anne without heirs. This Act, known as the Bill of Succession, was passed by both Houses without much opposition, and became law in the summer of 1701.

As William was desirous of gaining the support of the Elector George Louis to a grand alliance he was then meditating, he made the passing of the Act an occasion to pay special honour to the Electoral House. He dispatched Lord Macclesfield to Hanover charged with the mission of delivering a copy of the Act to the Electress Sophia, and of investing her son with the Order of the Garter. The selection of Lord Macclesfield was doubtless due to the fact that he was "some sort of a relation" of the Electress Sophia's mother, Elizabeth, daughter of James I., through whom the succession came to the House of Hanover. His mission was a curious compromise between the official and unofficial. He was not given any appellation as plenipotentiary or envoy, yet he took with him a numerous and splendid suite, including the Irish traveller, Toland, to whose lively pen we are indebted for an account of this mission.

Whatever indifference the Electress Sophia and her son may have feigned towards the splendid prospects opening out before them, it vanished when the news came that Lord Macclesfield had actually set out from England. He was met on the frontier of the Electorate by the ministers and chief officials of the Electoral Court, and escorted with great pomp to Hanover, where a reception of unparalleled magnificence was accorded to him. He and every member of his suite, down to the very valets, were treated with profuse liberality, and lodged and entertained in the most sumptuous manner. Had Macclesfield been William himself he could not have been entertained more royally. A banquet was held overnight, and the next day, the proudest day of the Elec-

tress Sophia's life, Lord Macclesfield formally presented her with the Act of Succession and invested her son with the insignia of the Garter. The Electress Sophia gave him her portrait, surmounted by the electoral crown in diamonds, and the Elector George gave him a gold basin and ewer. The chaplain of the mission, Dr. Sandys, presented many prayer books to the Electress, which she did not use, and she rewarded him with many books in return and a gold snuff-box. All the suite were likewise given souvenirs, and they returned to England with wonderful tales of the liberality of the Hanoverian Court, which they represented as a land flowing with milk and honey.

From that day forward the little German town became the goal of many political and military adventurers from England, who turned their eyes from the setting sun of St. Germain's to the rising orb of Hanover. Nor were the fair adventuresses one whit behind. Many made haste from England to Hanover with the idea of enslaving the Elector or his son, notably the beautiful Mrs. Howard, who was so poor that she cut off her beautiful hair and sold it to pay the cost of the journey. The sacrifice did not pass unrewarded, for she ultimately became Lady Suffolk and mistress of George II.

The description which Toland, writing later to the English minister in Holland, gave of these festivities may be quoted here. Speaking of the Electress Sophia he says:

"The Electress is three and seventy years old, which she bears so wonderfully well that had I not many vouchers I should not dare venture to relate it. She has ever enjoyed extraordinary health, which keeps her still very vigorous, of a cheerful countenance, and a merry disposition. She steps as firm and as erect as any young

lady, has not one wrinkle in her face—which is still very agreeable—not one tooth out of her head, and reads without spectacles, as I have often seen her do, letters of a small character in the dusk of the evening. She is as great a worker as our late Queen [Mary], and you cannot turn yourself in the palace without meeting some monument of her industry, all the chairs in the presence chamber being wrought with her own hands. The ornaments of the altar in the electoral chapel are all of her work. She bestowed the same favour on the Protestant Abbey, or College, of Lockburn, with a thousand other incidents fitter for your lady to know than for yourself. She is the most constant and greatest walker I ever knew, never missing a day, if it proves fine, for one or two hours and even more in the fine garden at Herrenhausen. She perfectly tires all those of her Court who attend her in that exercise and such as have the honour to be entertained by her discourse. She has been long admired by all the learned world as a woman of incomparable knowledge in divinity, philosophy, history, and the subjects of all sorts of books, of which she has read a prodigious quantity. She speaks five languages so well that by her accent it might be a dispute which of them was her first; they are Low Dutch, German, French, Italian, and English, which last she speaks as truly and easily as any native, which to me is a matter of amazement, whatever advantages she might have in her youth by the conversation of her mother. . . . But indeed the Electress is so entirely English in her presence, in her behaviour, in her humour, in all her inclinations, that naturally she could not miss of anything that peculiarly belongs to our land. She was ever glad to see Englishmen long before the Act of Succession; she professes to admire our form of government, and understands it

mighty well. Yet she asks so many questions about families, customs, laws, and the like as sufficiently demonstrate her profound wisdom and experience. She has a deep veneration for the Church of England, without losing any affection or charity for any other sort of Protestants, and appears charmed with the moderate temper of our present Bishops and that of our learned clergy, especially for their approbation of the liberty allowed by law to Protestant Dissenters. . . . I was the first to have the honour of kneeling and kissing her hand on account of the Act of Succession, and she said among other discourse that she was afraid the nation had already repented their choice of an old woman, but she hoped that none of her posterity would give England any reason to grow weary of their dominion. I answered that the English had too well considered what they did to change their mind so soon, and they still remember they were never so happy as when they were last under a woman's government."

Making allowance for courtly flattery, it must be admitted that the Electress Sophia was a remarkable old woman; but our faith in the strict veracity of Toland is somewhat shaken when he proceeds to describe the Elector George, as a "proper, middle-sized, well-proportioned man of gentle address and good appearance; but His Highness is reserved, and therefore speaks little, but judiciously. I hope," adds Toland, "that none of our countrymen will be so injudicious as to think his reservedness the effect of sullenness or pride; nor mistake that for State which really proceeds from modesty, caution, and deliberation." This is bad enough, but our belief is still more tried when he goes on to describe the two hideous mistresses of this Hanoverian Solomon—Madame Kielmansegge as a "woman of sense and wit,"

and Madame Schulenburg as "especially worthy of the rank she enjoys, and in the opinion of others as well as myself a lady of extraordinary merit." After this there is nothing more to be said!

Of poor Sophie Dorothea, who had now gone back to her dreary captivity at Ahlden, Toland has not a word to say, though he must have known of her existence; nor had she, "the genuine wife," as Horace Walpole calls her, any share in her husband's new and growing honours.

Soon after the delivery of the Act of Succession old King James died at St. Germain, and his son declared himself determined to walk in his father's faith, which was all in favour of the Hanoverian succession and the Electress Sophia. England and English affairs now absorbed her wholly, and she had neither time nor inclination to think about Sophie Dorothea. The Duchess of Celle kept up an agitation in her daughter's favour, but the Electoral Court was inflated with its English prospects and took no heed. Nothing was gained that affected the principle of the agreement arranged before the divorce. We find the Duchess d'Orleans writing to her aunt:

December 24, 1702.—"As the Duchess of Ahlden often sees her mother and other ladies, and can also go for drives, she is not so much to be pitied."

And this was doubtless the view of the Electress Sophia, who would have kept her even a closer prisoner if she could.

The death of William III. and the accession of Anne to the throne of England brought the Electress Sophia one step nearer to her coveted goal, and she became "the heiress of Great Britain," as she loved to describe herself. But Anne had no love for her "heiress" and kept

her at arm's length. The Duchess of Celle, who had heard of Anne's dislike of her Hanoverian relatives and of her kindness of heart, seized the opportunity to place the sad case of her daughter before the powerful Queen of England. She wrote beseeching her to use her influence on behalf of the imprisoned Princess.¹ After some time an answer came—what it was history sayeth not. It is probable that Queen Anne did not send an absolute refusal, but promised to give the matter her consideration. This promise, it would seem, she kept, and she did what she could, for we find the Duchess d'Orleans writing two years afterwards to the Electress Sophia:

November 30, 1704.—"They say in Paris Lord Marlborough intends to travel to Hanover and do his best to bring about a reconciliation between the Duchess of Ahlden and the Elector, and he proposes to offer his daughter in marriage to the Prince [George Augustus]."

If Marlborough really undertook this delicate mission, it had little or no effect. The Princess would not have bought her liberty at the price of cohabiting again with her husband, and it may be doubted if the Elector would have had her back on any terms. With two natures so stubborn even the diplomacy of Marlborough could have effected nothing.

The following year, 1705, the Princess's chances of liberty received what must be considered their final blow in the death of her father. Of late years the old Duke had manifested considerable interest in his daughter, and had talked of going to see her; but Bernstorff had thrown such obstacles in the way, and had drawn such a picture

¹ The letter dated September 20, 1702, is said to be in the State Paper Office, but I cannot find it, though mention is made by Cresset of a letter from the Duchess of Celle to Queen Anne, and he writes to the Foreign Minister at home for an answer.

of the Electoral displeasure and the difficulties which this meeting would surely create with Hanover, that the ease-loving Duke gave way and postponed his visit. But he returned to the subject ever and anon, and that his heart had softened towards his only child is manifest from a codicil which he added to his will dated January 26, 1705, which materially benefited the Princess, and made her the residuary legatee of his large fortune. The same day the Duchess of Celle also made a will, with the approval of her husband, which provided that the "Duchess of Ahlden" should inherit at her death a sum of sixty thousand thalers deposited in the banks of the Hague and Amsterdam, also the estate of Olbreuse in Poitou, the mansion of Wienhausen, and all her jewelry, furniture, and plate. She also left her an income of three thousand thalers a year from another estate.

The combined effect of these wills was to make the prisoner of Ahlden one of the richest heiresses in Europe. Both her father and her mother must have had in mind her eventual liberty, as it would have been a mere mockery to have left her this wealth and have kept her shut up in Ahlden, where she could not spend it, and where her income was already in excess of her needs. The old Duke at last seemed determined to do what he could to repair the injustice done to his daughter, and when the wills were signed he announced his determination of going to see her. He was now in his seventieth year and his strength was fast failing; he wished to be reconciled to his only child before he died. This natural and laudable desire Bernstorff opposed as long as he dared, but seeing the Duke's mind was made up, he changed his tactics and merely advised him to postpone his visit until after a shooting expedition on which he was bent. The delay, as the minister hoped, proved fatal;

the Duke caught a chill, which he tried to remedy by taking the waters of Wienhausen, and he followed this drastic cure even after he had taken to his bed. Poley, who had now succeeded Cresset as English envoy, writes:

"That which contributed to his distemper was the taking the waters in bed, and, being in a sweat, he was so impatient as to rise in his shirt and open the windows, by which he got a great cold, which threw him into the colik and took away his stomach. . . . I forgot to mention y^e worse symptoms which attended y^e Duke of Zelle's distemper in the beginning was a hyccop, which continues, and he vomits all he takes."¹

The "hyccop" proved fatal. The Duke died ten days later, and was universally mourned by his subjects. He was of a singularly upright and straightforward character, always a true friend, generous and kind-hearted; but he was irresolute and easily swayed, and possessed that vein of obstinacy often found in weak characters. On this weakness the wily Bernstorff played to the great benefit of Hanover and to the detriment of the Duchess of Celle and her daughter. Bernstorff was now rewarded for his breach of trust by being raised to the rank of Count, and a little later he succeeded old Platen as confidential minister to the Elector of Hanover.

The death of the Duke of Celle left his widow and daughter at the mercy of their implacable foe the Elector. The Duchess Eléonore could expect no consideration, and her daughter no justice, from their enemies at Hanover. With indecent haste the widow was ordered to quit the Castle of Celle and withdraw to Wienhausen, which had been provided for her under her husband's

¹ Poley's *Despatch*, Hanover, August 18, 1705.

will. The whole of the territory of Celle now became merged with that of Hanover under the Elector George, whose power and dignity were greatly enhanced thereby; but the "genuine wife" through whom all this wealth came, was still kept a prisoner at Ahlden, and to her prayers and entreaties for freedom her husband turned a deaf ear. All Sophie Dorothea now asked was that she might be allowed to go and live somewhere quietly with her widowed mother, and permission afforded her to see her children. Both requests were refused. It has been stated that George greatly increased the rigours of the Princess's imprisonment after her father's death; there exists no proof of this, but he may have cut her off from attending public worship in the parish church and have limited her drives. Her mother was still allowed to visit her and did so until her death, but no new concessions, not even the most trifling, were accorded. The Elector took his stand on the agreement arrived at before the divorce between his father and his uncle, and it was rigidly maintained. The Princess might as well have pleaded to a stone.

The same year that witnessed the death of Duke George William saw also the decease of two of the enemies of Sophie Dorothea. Sophia Charlotte, Queen of Prussia, better known in this book as the Electress of Brandenburg, expired suddenly when on a visit to Hanover. Some say she passed away with an epigram on her lips, and others that she departed in the true faith of a Christian. With such a conflict of testimony, who shall say? She had been brought up "of no religion as yet," and she probably died in the same frame of mind. Her aged mother mourned her greatly.

A month later the Countess Platen died. Her last years had been rendered a torment by a disease which

made her hideous to behold and deprived her of sight. But, blind though she was, she nevertheless, as Thackeray says, "constantly saw Königsmarck's ghost by her wicked old bed." She suffered torments of remorse for her share in his death, and it is said that she made a confession on her deathbed of the part she had played in his murder. A document purporting to come from her confessor has been published, but there is no proof of its genuineness.

The bells at Hanover had scarcely ceased tolling for the Duke of Celle's death, than they rang out a merry peal for the marriage of Sophie Dorothea's son, George Augustus, to Caroline of Anspach, afterwards the famous Queen Caroline of England. The young Princess had been brought up at the Court of Berlin under the wing of the Queen of Prussia. She was beautiful, witty, and clever, and early sided with her husband against his father; but there is nothing to show that she took the part of his persecuted mother. The marriage of her son affected in no way the fortunes of Sophie Dorothea, nor was the event officially communicated to her. She was not even allowed to send him her good wishes on his marriage.

About this time the English envoy, Poley, was recalled, and he sent home an interesting document,¹ in which he gives a detailed account of the Electoral family of Hanover. It is, of course, written with a courtly pen, with a view to possible eventualities, and the description which he gives of the Electress Sophia and the Elector, though more moderately worded, is somewhat on the lines of that already quoted from Toland. Unlike Toland, he

¹ Still preserved in the State Paper Office. "Called Mr. Poley's account of the House of Brunswick, etc., upon his return from being Her Majesty's envoy at Hanover, November 9, 1705."

could not ignore the existence of the prisoner of Ahlden, and this is how he mentions her:

“The Elector was formerly married to a daughter of the Duke of Zell, by whom he had one son and one daughter, but was afterwards separated from her; since which time she hath lived at Ahlden, of which she bears the title, in the country of Zell. She hath a revenue appropriated to her, and of which is in possession, and, as some have imagined, may perhaps goe live with her mother at the turn of Lüneburg, whither it is said that the Duchess-Dowager of Zell intends to retire.”

The case could hardly be more diplomatically worded; the facts are correct, yet the inference they convey is wholly false. One would gather from this effusion that Sophie Dorothea was living in dignified and voluntary retirement instead of being a prisoner in two small rooms, closely guarded, and watched over by gaolers and spies. The following account of her children from the same despatch is also of interest:

“The Prince Electoral was born in the year 1683, and is of middle stature, but seems of constitution less vigorous than his father. He hath much witt and good humour in his conversation, and hath all the inclinations suitable to his quality. He was lately married to a Princess of the House of Brandenburg-Anspach of the same age with himself, and of so many good qualities and endowments as may promise much happiness to the Family.

“The Princess of Hanover, daughter of the Elector, is of about eighteen years of age, and something about middle stature and well shaped. She hath much beauty and is of agreeable conversation. Her marriage hath been talked of with the King of Sweden, but I doe not know that it was ever proposed. The Prince Royall of Prussia,

her couzen germane, is thought to have more inclination for her than for anybody else, but it hath been doubted if the King of Prussia would be willing to consent to that marriage."

Poley's surmise that the Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia was in love with his cousin, the young Sophie Dorothea, proved to be correct, for though he had a "choice of three" he loved her above all others, and overcame his father's dislike to the match. They were married in November, 1706, with much ceremony, at Hanover, and soon after set out for Berlin. The lonely mother at Ahlden heard of her daughter's brilliant marriage in the same way she had heard of her son's, through her mother; but she was not allowed to communicate with her, nor was the Duchess-Dowager of Celle present at either of the weddings. To the Electoral family Eléonore had once more become "the d'Olbreuse," and was treated accordingly. Her age, her grey hairs, her bereavements, her powerlessness to do harm, made no difference to the contempt and hatred with which the Electress Sophia and her son pursued her. Her grandchildren, however, took her part, and, though they were powerless to help their mother, they protected their grandmother from open insult. The young crown Princess of Prussia was now far away from her mother and the centre of a brilliant Court, yet the lonely captive at Ahlden contrived to enter into some sort of correspondence with her.

There was now a strong disposition on the part of the Hanoverian Court to hush up all mention of Sophie Dorothea. The time was certainly favourable: her father was dead, her mother powerless, her children married; she was without a friend on earth. Why should she not be quietly buried in her living tomb? But family skeletons

are notoriously hard things to hide; they have a habit of popping out whether we will or no, and Sophie Dorothea was not a woman to be easily suppressed. She had come to see that there was nothing to be gained by submission, and henceforth she assumed more aggressive tactics, filling the air with her cries, and beating her wings against the bars of her cage in vain endeavour for freedom. Poor woman! it was vain to cry, and she only bruised her bosom with her struggles; but one thing she achieved,—she saved herself from being forgotten by the outside world. Her mother's old friend, Duke Antony Ulrich, was especially indignant at the way she was treated after her father's death and at the Elector's refusal to allow her to go and live quietly with her mother. Animated by hatred of the House of Hanover, quite as much as by sympathy for Sophie Dorothea, he resolved to give the world the story of her wrongs. He was powerless to help her in any other way, but for this task he was peculiarly fitted. Unlike most princes of his age, he dabbled in literature and was a voluminous and ready writer, the author of prose romances, poems, and plays. He determined to turn his gifts to account by elaborating the story of his much-wronged cousin, which, indeed, would furnish material for any romance. He had been working for some time at the *Roman Octavia*, a series of episodes nominally taken from the Roman emperors, into which he had incorporated many scenes and events of his own life and times disguised by ancient names. He now devoted the sixth, or supplementary, volume to the history of Sophie Dorothea. No doubt he was aided in this by Eléonore von Knessebeck, who was then living at Wolfenbüttel.

The narrative so closely resembled what had actually happened, that every one could penetrate through the

thinly veiled disguise of fictitious names and learn the story of the injured Princess. It was told in the form of dramatic dialogue, with due regard to stage effect. Duke George William appears as King Polemon of Cappadocia; his Duchess is Dinames, a Spanish Princess; Ernest Augustus is Mythrdates, King of Pontus. The Electress Sophia, whom Antony Ulrich especially hated, is satirised under the name of Adonacris, "who, as the sister of the great Indian king, gave herself the airs of one of the mightiest princesses in the world." George Louis figures as Prince Cotys, a dull and brutal youth; while Sophie Dorothea appears as the Princess Solane, who for beauty and riches had no rival in Asia. Königsmarck figures as Æquilius, one of the Roman lords at the Court of the incomparable Queen Adonacris. The Princess's story is then told from the beginning: her early marriage to the man she loathed, the cruelty with which she was treated at the Court of Hanover, the appearance of Königsmarck, who had known her as a child, and his passion for her. But the Princess in the play is represented to be as virtuous as she was beautiful, and she resisted her lover's advances by every means in her power. The account of the catastrophe is consequently modified to suit the theory of the innocence of the Princess. It is stated that one of her Highness's ladies hid the cavalier in her chamber, and then sent a message to the Princess saying that she was ill. The Princess, in compassion, came to see her, and as soon as she entered the room the lover threw himself at her feet. At this juncture the Prince, her husband, appeared on the scene with a drawn sword; the Princess swooned, and the lover was hurried away, never again to see the light. The Princess's protestations of innocence were without avail, and as appearances were against her a divorce was

effected, and she was consigned to prison, where she bore her fate with dignity.

Such, in rough outline, is the story of this work, which had a great success. It was eagerly read in every Court of Europe and continued to have a large circulation far into the eighteenth century, and even in the present century has formed the unacknowledged source of many so-called "lives" of Sophie Dorothea. The lonely prisoner of Ahlden was one of the most talked-about women of her generation. The secrecy and mystery surrounding her only served to whet the public curiosity.

The Electress Sophia early obtained a copy of the *Octavia*, and so did her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans. We find her writing to her aunt:

July 25, 1708.—"I am going to read the *Octavia* over again, as George Louis has been kind enough to send me the key to it. Duke Antony Ulrich makes Solane appear innocent, but that is only done to save the honour of the House. In all matters his truth is mixed with a modicum of lies. Cotys I consider cold, but not brutal. There is no doubt that Solane was a coquette; Lassaye has told me plenty about that, so much that I have not the slightest doubt about it. I was obliged to laugh, when Duke Christian looks on it as an improvement that she had at least stuck to *one* in particular. . . . I, however, find safety in numbers: one is dangerous, as events have proved. I should like to know if her husband has still any wish to see her, particularly as they say she is still beautiful. It would be only right for her mother to keep her company, for her bad upbringing is the cause of all the daughter's misfortunes."

On this string, the bad upbringing, the Duchess is always harping. Still, as the years went on, even she could not forbear some pity for the imprisoned woman.

We find the following allusions in her letters to her aunt, and they are about the only authentic record we have of Sophie Dorothea during these years:

October 27, 1709.—"It must grieve the Princess deeply to know that her children are so near and not to be able to see them; I really feel sorry for her. I should like to know if her children have any desire to see her."

But apparently she repents of this pity, for the next year we find this:

May 8, 1710.—"That the Princess always sits before her looking-glass may be excused her, and proves that her nature is to coquette."

Two years later the correspondence between these two remarkable women ceased for ever—the Electress Sophia was dead. She died within sight of her promised land. It chanced in this wise. Since the Act of Succession, and more especially since the accession of Queen Anne, the Hanoverian family had watched with keener and more personal interest the progress of events in England. The Queen had created the Elector George a Duke of the Blood Royal, and had given him precedence over the entire peerage, and the name of the Electress Sophia had been inserted in the Church prayers. Later the Electoral Prince, George Augustus, was created Duke of Cambridge. But this was the extent of Queen Anne's recognition. She was exceedingly jealous of her Hanoverian relations, and she especially disliked her old wooer, the Elector George. It would seem that in her heart she yearned after her brother, the exiled Prince of Wales; but she was so vacillating, and withal so timid, that it was impossible to say what she really wished or did not wish, and it may be doubted whether she knew herself. The party in England which upheld the

Protestant succession had many agents at the Hanoverian Court. As Queen Anne's health grew weaker and her favour for her brother stronger, this party became much alarmed, and repeatedly urged the advisability of the Electress Sophia or her heirs making themselves known to the people of England. But the Electress could hardly go to England during Queen Anne's lifetime without the Queen's invitation, though she was "the heiress of Great Britain." She was very old, and reluctant to move from her beloved Herrenhausen unless she should be summoned to England as Queen. But she was strongly in favour of her son or grandson going, and her supporters in England were equally desirous. They petitioned the Elector to come over and take his seat in the House of Lords, or, if he could not come, at least the Electoral Prince, George Augustus, might pay a visit to England. The Whigs were ready to organise demonstrations in favour of the House of Hanover, and the Elector and Electoral Prince expressed themselves as willing to go. The aged Electress Sophia set her heart upon it above all things. The desire of long years seemed near fruition; the visit of her son or grandson to the Court of England would be the outward sign and symbol of what she most yearned for. "I care not when I die, if on my tomb it be recorded that I was Queen of Great Britain and Ireland," said this dauntless old woman of eighty; and, despite her advanced age, there seemed a likely prospect of her wish being granted, for her health was better than Anne's. This remark was repeated to the Queen, and greatly incensed her against the Electress Sophia. A scribbler named d'Urfey, wishing to curry favour with his Royal mistress, wrote the following doggerel:

The crown's far too weighty
For shoulders of eighty,
She could not sustain such a trophy.
Her hand, too, already
Has grown so unsteady
She could not hold a sceptre.
So Providence kept her
Away. Poor old Dowager Sophy!

For this effusion d'Urfey received a fee of fifty guineas from Anne. When the news of the proposed Hanoverian visit reached the Queen's ears, she was beside herself with rage. It seemed to her an attempt to snatch the crown from her grasp before she was dead, and to force her hand in the matter of the succession. Like a true Stuart, whatever Parliament might say or do, she always felt the crown of England was her own peculiar possession, to bestow upon whom she would. As long as she lived she was determined that no Hanoverian prince should set foot in her dominions. She therefore sat down and penned strongly worded letters to the Electress Sophia and the Elector George Louis. Her letter to the Electress Sophia ran as follows:

To the Electress-Dowager of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

“MADAME, SISTER, AUNT,—Since the right of succession to my kingdom has been declared to belong to you and your family, there have always been disaffected persons who, by particular views of their own interest, have entered into measures to fix a prince of your blood in my dominions even whilst I am yet living. I never thought till now that this project would have gone so far as to have made the least impression on your mind; but as I have lately perceived by public rumours, which are industriously spread, that Your Electoral Highness is come into this sentiment, it is important with respect to the succession of your family that I should tell you such

a proceeding will infallibly draw along with it some consequence that will be dangerous to the succession itself, which is not secure any other wise than as the Prince, who actually wears the crown, maintains her authority and prerogative. There are here—such is our misfortune—a great many people that are seditiously disposed; so I leave you to judge what tumults they may be able to raise if they should have a pretext to begin a commotion. I persuade myself, therefore, you will never consent that the least thing should be done that may disturb the repose of me or my subjects.

“Open yourself with the same freedom that I do to you, and propose whatever you think may contribute to the security of the succession. I will go into it with zeal, provided that it did not derogate from my dignity, which I am resolved to maintain.

“I am, with a great deal of affection, etc.,

“ANNE R.

“*May 19, 1714.*”

The Queen's letter to the Elector George was shorter, but equally to the point. She told him plainly that nothing could be more dangerous to the interests of the Hanoverian succession than the idea of himself or his son coming to her dominions, and nothing could be more disagreeable to herself.

These letters reached Hanover a week later, and proved fatal to the Electress Sophia. When she received the Queen's peremptory letter she not only lost her cherished hope, but also her temper. She was well stricken in years and could ill bear agitation of such a kind. A few days after the letters arrived she was dead. Mollineux, who was an agent of the Duke of Marlborough at Hanover, gives the following account of her end:

"I ran up there [*i.e.* the garden at Herrenhausen] and found her fast expiring in the arms of the poor Electoral Princess, and amidst the tears of a great many of her servants, who endeavoured in vain to help. I can give you no account of her illness, but that I believe the shock of those villainous letters I sent you last post has been in a great measure the cause of it. The Rheingravine, who has been with her this fifteen years, told me she never knew anything make so deep an impression on her as the affair of the Prince's journey, which I am sure she had to the last degree at heart, and she has done me the honour to tell me so twenty times. In the midst of this, however, these letters arrived, and these I verily believe have broken her heart and brought her with sorrow to the grave.

"The letters were delivered on Wednesday at seven. When I came to Court she was at cards. She was so full of these letters that she got up and ordered me to follow her into the garden, where she gave them to me to read, and walked and spoke a good deal in relation to them. I believe she walked three hours that night. The next morning, which was Thursday, I heard that she was out of order, and on going immediately to Court, she ordered me to be called into her bedchamber. She gave me the letters (I sent you to copy); she bade me send them next post, and bring them to her to Court. This was on Friday in the morning. On Friday they told me she was very well, but seemed much chagrined. She was dressed, and dined with the Elector as usual. At four she did me the honour to send to town for some other copies of the same letters. Then she was still perfectly well. She walked and talked very hurriedly in the Orangery. After that, about six, she went out to walk in the garden. A shower of rain came on, and as she was walking

pretty fast to get to shelter, they told her she was walking a little too fast. She answered, 'I believe I do,' and dropped down on saying these words, which were her last. They raised her up, chaffed her with spirits, tried to bleed her; but it was all in vain, and when I came up she was as dead as if she had been four days so."

The Electress Sophia died on June 10, 1714, Queen Anne on the following September 1, so the Electress Sophia missed being Queen of England by a little more than two months, and died with the desire of her heart ungratified. Perhaps this was a retribution on her for her harshness to her unhappy daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CROWN AND GRAVE

(1714—1726)

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust.

TENNYSON, *Maud*.

A FEW hours after Queen Anne breathed her last the Elector of Hanover was proclaimed in London as George I. King of Great Britain and Ireland as quietly as if he had been undisputed heir to the throne, and Lord Berkeley was sent with a fleet to Orange Polder, in Holland, to bring over the new King. The news was speedily conveyed to Hanover; but George received it without enthusiasm, and showed no haste to enter upon his inheritance. Unlike his mother, he had neither sought nor coveted the English crown; as it was thrust upon him, he took it, and made the most of it for the benefit of his beloved Hanover. When he at last set out for his new dominion he took with him a horde of Hanoverian parasites, and two hideous old women, one his mistress, Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg, and the other Madame Kielmansegge, a daughter of Countess Platen, but whether the King's mistress, or half-sister, or both, must ever remain a mystery. Schulenburg was even more reluctant than her beloved George to go to England; she desired nothing more than a quiet life and a comfortable pension in Hanover. Eng-

land, she said, was a place where they used their kings barbarously, and might even chop her George's head off in the first fortnight. She besought him with tears not to go, or, at any rate, to leave her at home. But George reassured her by saying grimly, "All the king-killers are on my side," and promised much gold and many dignities if she would follow him to the land of promise. So, grumbling, she packed up her trunks and trundled off with him. She was now fifty-five years of age, extraordinarily tall and lean; her skin hung loosely on her fleshless bones, her cheeks were ruddled with rouge, and she habitually dressed in glaring and discordant colours. The other lady Madame Kielmansegge, was unable to leave Hanover the same day as the King owing to her debts, which he was too niggardly to pay; but she managed to avoid her creditors and caught up the Royal traveller at the Hague. If we may believe Horace Walpole's well-known account, she was even less attractive than Schulenburg.

"Lady Darlington,"¹ he says, "whom I saw at my mother's in my infancy, and whom I remember by being terrified at her enormous figure, was as corpulent and ample as the Duchess² was long and emaciated. Two fierce black eyes, large and rolling, between two lofty eyebrows, two acres of cheeks spread with crimson, an ocean of neck that overflowed and was not distinguished from the lower part of her body, and no part restrained by stays—no wonder that a child dreaded such an ogress!"

Accompanied by these two favourites, King George set sail from Orange Polder, where the English fleet was waiting, and landed two days later at Greenwich. He

¹ The title given her by the King.

² The Duchess of Kendal (Schulenburg).

was not left stranded on the mud this time, as in the days of his former visit when he came a-courting the Lady Anne of York. A servile crowd of place-hunters was now awaiting him, whose fervent expressions of loyalty he rated for what they were worth. Two days later the King made his public entry into London. His heavy, ungainly presence and ungracious manner did not impress the populace favourably; but their dislike changed to derision when they saw the two hideous mistresses by whom he was accompanied, and they relieved their feelings by hoots and yells. At this Schulenburg, who had picked up a little English in her youth, thrust her head out of the window of the coach and cried:

"Goot people, why you abuse us?—we come for all your goots."

"Yes, damn ye!" answered a fellow in the crowd, "and for all our chattels, too."

So entered into this kingdom the first of our Hanoverian Sovereigns.

In her lonely Castle of Ahlden Sophie Dorothea heard of the splendid heritage of the English crown; but she had no regrets on that score, all she grieved for was her loss of liberty. The accession of George I. made no difference to her lot; she was still kept in durance vile, still styled Duchess of Ahlden, and refused the rank and title of Queen, as she had been refused the title of Electress. Yet she was *de jure*, if not *de facto*, queen consort of George I., albeit a disowned and uncrowned one, as Caroline of Brunswick was, nearly a century later, the uncrowned consort of George IV. There seems little authority for the statement made by Doran and others that, previous to the King's departure for England, he made overtures through a confidential minister to his imprisoned wife for a reconciliation, and

on this and other occasions he was met by her words: "If I am guilty I am not worthy of him; if I am innocent he is not worthy of me." It is also said that she stipulated, as a preliminary, for a public apology and perfect freedom, and as this was refused negotiations broke down. But in the face of other evidence it seems unlikely that the King would have entered upon such negotiations at all. He had never shown the least wish to have his wife back again, and she had always declared her determination never to return to conjugal relations with him on any pretext whatever; it may be doubted if the prospect of becoming Queen Consort of England would have been sufficiently dazzling to have tempted her to rejoin him.

Viewed as a matter of policy, it would have been a good thing if George I. could have taken his wife to England with him. Though now well advanced in middle life (Sophie Dorothea was nearly fifty years of age and had been imprisoned twenty years), she was still beautiful, and her many accomplishments, her grace and dignity, would have lent a charm to the dull Court of St. James' and have helped to popularise the Hanoverian régime. But Sophie Dorothea had never shown herself *une femme complaisante*, and would most surely have objected to the harem which accompanied her husband to England. Knowing this, George I. doubtless thought it better to keep his wife shut up in Ahlden than to embark upon any hazardous scheme of reconciliation. His hands were full enough of domestic worries without being troubled with any more. His quarrels and bickerings with the Prince of Wales were matters of common notoriety, and reflected little credit on the dynasty; so every effort was made to keep the other family scandal hidden from his English subjects. Some of the Hanoverian suite who accompanied the King to England gave

out that His Majesty was a widower; others that his wife was mad; and others that she was a Papist; but the Jacobites ferreted out the truth, and did not scruple to make the most of it.

The harshness with which the King treated his Consort formed the favourite indictment against him, and was always brought up at popular demonstrations, as, for instance, on the anniversary of the death of Queen Anne, until the end of his reign. The story of Sophie Dorothea's hardships and misery in her mysterious castle was greatly exaggerated, and any allusion to the subject was resented by the King, who was especially sensitive on this score. He even thought it possible that his wife might escape from her prison, come over to England, and proclaim the story of her wrongs; so when he left Hanover he gave orders that she was to be guarded more closely than ever. This espionage was accompanied by extraordinary care for her health; the most loving husband could not have been more solicitous. In addition to her resident doctor at Ahlden, court physicians from Hanover visited the captive at stated intervals and made reports. This solicitude arose, not from regard, but from superstition. "It is known," writes Walpole, "that in Queen Anne's time there was much noise about the French prophets, and it certainly was a most superstitious age. One of this company, a prophetess Deborah, who was much esteemed for her prophetic gifts, once came to Hanover and told King George, who was then Elector, to take every care of his wife, as he would certainly not survive her twelve months."

Like all Germans, George I. was very superstitious, and Madame Schulenburg was even more so; so orders were given that everything should be done to keep the prisoner at Ahlden in good health. To this she probably

owed what liberty she possessed, including her daily drives. The reports which reached her tyrant from time to time were reassuring, for the captive enjoyed the best of health, to which her regular life no doubt contributed.

Her one grievance now was her imprisonment, against which, during the whole of her residence at Ahlden, she did not cease to protest and struggle. Time only intensified her desire for freedom. Short of this she bore her lot with fortitude and resignation, and even her enemies gave grudging testimony to the admirable way in which she ordered her life. The daily round, weary and monotonous though it was, brought little duties which she never neglected. Her household and estates were admirably managed, and in the country around the poor rose up and called her blessed. When the village of Ahlden was burnt down in 1715 she rebuilt it at her own expense, and widened the view from the castle. She derived great comfort from the consolations of religion, and every Sunday she took the sacrament in the presence of her household, and prayed God to forgive her enemies and turn their hearts. Even against her arch-enemy, her husband, she at this time said nothing. The only ray of light in her gloom were the visits of her mother, who, despite her advanced age and increasing infirmities, still came from Wienhausen to see her beloved daughter as often as she was permitted to do so. She also found relief in her literary labours; she was always a graceful and ready writer, and in her later years she cultivated this faculty to her utmost. She wrote her memoirs in the hope that they would be permitted to see the light; but they were never given to the world, though many spurious imitations have been foisted on the public. It is believed also that romance and poetry flowed from her

pen; reams and reams of paper were covered by her handwriting, and boxes and boxes of manuscripts accumulated at Ahlden during the long years of her captivity, most of them circling around the tale of her own sad lot, and chiefly written with a view to setting herself right with the world. All these papers were ultimately suppressed, burned, or otherwise destroyed by order of the Hanoverian government, and, save for a few scattered fragments of little value, nothing has been left; her literary labours were as vain as the labours of Sisyphus. When she first came to Ahlden she carried on an extensive correspondence with friends and acquaintances, but it had gradually thinned by death. She still, however, wrote and received many letters, many of them quite openly, some in secret. Of the latter, the most important was her correspondence with her daughter, the Queen of Prussia.

Soon after the young Princess's marriage the King of Prussia died, and on her husband's accession she became the second Queen of Prussia. One of her first acts was to take into her service the faithful Eléonore Knesebeck, who until this time had been living at Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel. From Knesebeck the Queen learned the story of the captive's wrongs. Her heart had always yearned to her imprisoned mother, and, moved to fresh pity by the recital of Knesebeck, she determined to do what she could to ameliorate her lot. Under the seal of secrecy she opened up a correspondence with the prisoner of Ahlden. As this was contrary to the orders of both the King of Prussia and the King of England, it was necessary to surround it with extraordinary precautions. For several years mother and daughter managed to keep up a frequent correspondence, which was maintained chiefly through the Count de Bar, who, since the death

of the Duke of Celle, had acted as Sophie Dorothea's man of business, and looked after her money matters; Ludwig, a Privy Councillor at Berlin, Frederick one of the Queen of Prussia's pages, and Ludemann, a bailiff at Ahlden also assisted. Many communications passed between mother and daughter, not only on private matters, but on public affairs; the mother always imploring her daughter to aid her to gain her liberty, the daughter always promising to do her best, counselling patience, and sending from time to time little gifts to mark her good will. The King of Prussia soon got to know what was going on, but he discreetly shut his eyes for reasons of his own. He knew that his mother-in-law was possessed of a large property entirely under her control, and was also heiress to another. At her death she would leave her daughter a substantial share, if not the whole, and she was therefore a person to be humoured. The Queen of Prussia knew this, too, and subsequent events seem to show that this knowledge was not without its influence on her display of filial affection. But the poor lady at Ahlden believed her daughter's solicitude to be all born of love, and she gave back the love fourfold. She was of a warm-hearted, affectionate, and impulsive disposition, a nature years of solitude and misery had neither warped nor soured.

King George would have been very angry if he had known of this correspondence; but he was now chiefly in England, and he tried to forget the very existence of his wife.

Far away from Ahlden, he was acquitting himself after his manner in his new dominions. He loved not England; he never troubled to learn the language, nor to make himself acquainted with the laws and customs of the country over which he was called to reign. He left

all government in the hands of his ministers, made them responsible, and directed his energies to plundering England for the benefit of his beloved Hanover. His favourite ladies followed suit, and their greed and unloveliness gave rise to the grossest lampoons. Schulenburg was nicknamed "The Maypole," and Kielmansegge "The Elephant," and rude cartoons were sold in the gutters and purlieus of the city of London.

One scribbler wrote: "We are being ruined by trulls—nay, what is more vexatious, by old ugly trulls, such as could not find entertainment, in the most hospitable hundreds of old Drury." This libel formed a subject of debate in the House of Commons, and was punished with imprisonment and fine. Nevertheless the charge was true: the ugliness of these ladies was undeniable, their morals were not above reproach, and their rapacity was beyond conception. Like their master, they seemed to regard England as a temporary possession, to be made the most of while it lasted, and they grabbed everything they could lay hold of, even Queen Anne's jewels; they appropriated places and pensions, and sold their real or supposed influence with the King for enormous sums. As a reward for their complaisance in following him to England, King George had settled on them large incomes, and lodged them in St. James' Palace. He created Schulenburg Duchess of Kendal, and Kielmansegge Countess of Darlington. These, then, were the ladies who graced the Court of St. James' under George I. Never had England seen more avaricious favourites, not even in the worst days of the Stuarts. Charles II. had his mistresses, numerous and extravagant enough in all truth, but they were beautiful, as Lady Castlemaine, or witty, as the Duchess of Portsmouth, or good-natured, like Nell Gwynne. But the "Elephant" and the "May-

pole'' were not as these; they represented vice in all its ugliness. Even in their failings the Stuarts were picturesque, and invested their wrongdoing with a certain splendour and refinement. But what can be said in defence of the Court of our first Hanoverian Sovereign? how palliate its utter grossness, its ugliness, meanness, and avarice? And as George I. began his reign so it continued to the end: the English Court, if Court it could be called, had never sunk so low. The palace of St. James' became a focus of shameless immorality and sordid corruption, and to it all was added the bitterness of a family feud. The father hated the son, and the son hated the father; the ministers hated the mistresses, and the mistresses hated the ministers. All was, in short, hatred, falsehood, and intrigue; the worst passions of human nature were fostered in this foetid atmosphere. Such was the reign of the first George, and such was the man who sat in judgment on his wife, and doomed her to lifelong imprisonment because, in her youth, she had loved one man, not wisely, but too well. Faugh! the air stifles us, let us open the windows and away.

Back again to Ahlden, back to the lonely castle on the desolate heath, over which the wind swept shrilly. Yet, shrill and biting though it was, it at least had no taint of the poisonous breath of St. James'. Back again to the poor prisoner of nearly thirty years, eating her heart out in loneliness and woe, praying daily for the deliverance that never came. Let us hasten quickly: it is our last journey.

Early in 1722 Sophie Dorothea lost the one being whom she could trust in the world, the mother whose love had never failed her, and who, in the darkest hour, sought to protect her interests and defend her good name against all the world. Since her husband's death the Duchess of

Celle, though grudgingly accorded the outward honours due to her rank, had been subject to many petty insults and annoyances from the Hanoverian government, which she suffered uncomplainingly.

Up to a short time of her death the Duchess Eléonore was regular in her visits to her daughter. Her cheerful presence came as the one gleam of sunshine in the darkness of Ahlden; she was never tired of preaching resignation and of holding out the hope of a brighter future. One of her last acts was to again make her will in favour of her daughter, securing to her more firmly all the property she possessed, with the exception of a substantial life income which she bequeathed to her old friend Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. As soon as she had settled her earthly affairs the Duchess grew much weaker, and was warned that her end was near; but, weak and ailing though she was, she rose from her bed and made a supreme effort to visit her daughter once more. She journeyed to Ahlden, and had her last interview with the unhappy captive, and gave her her blessing. Mother and daughter parted with tears, fully persuaded they would never meet again. Their forebodings were soon realised, for when the Duchess reached home she returned to her bed, from which she never rose again. She was buried in the ducal vaults of Celle next her husband, but the vacant niche for her statue in the chancel above has never been filled,—another instance of the meanness of George I., who carried his vindictiveness even beyond the grave.

The Courts of England, Hanover, and Berlin decreed mourning as in duty bound, and in this “the Duchess of Ahlden” was permitted to join. Previously she had received no official notification of the mournings and

rejoicings in her family, not even of her father's death and her children's marriages.

Sophie Dorothea had reason enough to mourn, God knows: she had lost her one true friend on earth, and there seemed no prospect for her but to live on, uncared for, at the mercy of the relentless tyrant, her husband. Her fortitude of years began to give way, and in despair she meditated wild plans of escape, and set aside large sums of money to this end. But alas! the very people she trusted took her gold with one hand and betrayed her with the other. For a little time she was not without hope. Her son-in-law, King Frederick of Prussia, seemed interested in her cause; but his interest proved purely selfish. He was absolutely indifferent as to what became of his wife's mother, but was exceedingly interested in her fortune, which had been largely augmented by the death of the Duchess of Celle. He employed an agent in Hanover to discover exactly how matters stood and what share his wife would inherit from her mother. These inquiries gave great umbrage to King George. But they need not have done so, for when the King of Prussia discovered that his Queen would possess at least half her mother's fortune he no longer paid the captive of Ahlden the least consideration, and ordered his wife to discontinue her correspondence with her mother. Nevertheless, communications continued to pass between Ahlden and Berlin, though under greater secrecy than before. The Count de Bar, who was indeed a traitor of the deepest dye, was suspected by the Queen of Prussia, and she repeatedly warned her mother against him; but Sophie Dorothea clung to him to the very last.

One fertile subject of correspondence between mother and daughter was on what was called the "double marriage scheme" between Sophie Dorothea's grandchildren—

namely, the marriage of Frederick, son of the Prince of Wales, to Wilhelmina, daughter of the King and Queen of Prussia, and of their son Fritz, afterwards Frederick the Great, to Amelia, second daughter of the Prince of Wales. This double marriage was a darling project of the Queen of Prussia, cherished by her almost from the time the children were born. She was supported by her father, the King of England, but opposed by her husband, the King of Prussia. The "Duchess of Ahlden" opposed it, too, and instructed her agent at Berlin to work against the scheme, though how it could have made any difference to her passes imagination. This opposition so incensed the Queen of Prussia that she sent word to her mother to the effect that when the marriage scheme was an accomplished fact she would work her hardest to set her free, but not until then. As these marriages could not come off for years, in consequence of the youth of the Princess Amelia, this message was disheartening, and at first Sophie Dorothea would not credit it; but it is characteristic that it made no change in her opposition. There was no more to be expected from the King and Queen of Prussia. Foiled in the direction she had hoped for deliverance, she fell back again on plans of escape. From time to time she had entrusted Count 'de Bar with large sums of money, amounting altogether to some sixty thousand pounds which he deposited in the Bank of Amsterdam. He afterwards appropriated most of this to his own use;—but that is to anticipate. At this time Sophie Dorothea trusted him wholly, and her object in placing this money at Amsterdam was that it might come in useful to her in case she escaped from her husband's territory; but how she thought to effect a flight from the closely guarded Castle of Ahlden it is impossible to say. In this secret flight

the Count de Bar was to assist. The Queen of Prussia became aware of the project, and in much alarm entreated her mother to be patient. She again promised that she would help her as soon as her pet scheme of the double marriage was out of the way, and she asked her mother to help her effect it. She must have meant help with money to bribe ministers and agents, for there was no other way save money in which the imprisoned Princess could be of any use. She also advised a "general amnesty," which meant that her mother should seek a reconciliation with King George, and express her willingness to submit to his terms, whatever they might be. But Sophie Dorothea had a proud spirit, which all these years of captivity could not break, and she was a difficult woman to deal with. Much as she desired her freedom, she would make no sacrifice of dignity or consistency.

In the following letter to the Count de Bar, then at Berlin, she thus expresses herself on these proposals:

"[AHLDEN], *July 28, 1752.*

"I thank God that nothing in the world, not even the most dazzling and tempting prospect, would make the least impression upon me, or lead me into any meanness. I repeat that you are absolutely master to do as you please; but it is impossible for me ever to give my approval to a marriage scheme which would indubitably separate my daughter from my interests, and the consequences of which speak but too plainly for themselves. As to the 'general amnesty' which is deemed absolutely necessary, I told you last year what I thought on that subject. I merely add now that I have Christian sentiments, and am neither implacable nor animated with an unworthy desire of vengeance. I am far from wishing anything harsh or cruel. But it would be very mortify-

ing to me to find myself disappointed of all satisfaction after so many outrages and insults; and this cannot be considered as a criminal revenge, but rather as a point of honour, conformable to Holy Scripture and the example of St. Paul. See the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xvi., vv. 36, 37.

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA."

There is little doubt that Sophie Dorothea was wise in refusing to part with money to advance the Queen of Prussia's marriage schemes without some adequate security that her daughter would really carry out her promise; and she was probably wise, too, in spurning the idea of a general amnesty if that involved submission to George I. and his mistresses. She would sacrifice her dignity and consistency on the one hand, and would gain nothing on the other, for it was hardly likely that the King's promises, supposing that he made any, were to be trusted. This uncompromising attitude on her part furnished the Queen of Prussia with a further pretext for doing nothing more for her mother, and she directed her confidential agent, Frederick, to communicate, through Ludemann, the bailiff of Ahlden, "that affairs were in so bad a state that it was impossible to take any steps without making bad worse and causing more unhappiness, but that time and Providence would ameliorate everything." She also refused to receive the Count de Bar any more at Berlin, as she distrusted both his good faith and his ability. Frederick, the Queen's agent, was sent to interview Ludemann, either at Ahlden or at some place near, and to communicate to him verbally the Queen's message to her mother. Ludemann drew up a report of his conversation with Frederick, which, *inter alia*, runs as follows:

"The Queen sends her best regards to Her Highness with the strongest assurances of her entire affection, respect, and filial devotion, soliciting to maintain a place in the affections of her mother, for whom she forwards some souvenirs. She would with pleasure have written, but the circumstances in which she is placed render writing too hazardous. The least movement in Her Highness's favour cannot be made without great danger."

The Queen of Prussia's messenger went on to say that all correspondence and communications must cease for a time. On behalf of the Queen he again denounced the Count de Bar as a dangerous traitor. Ludemann, Sophie Dorothea's agent, commented on the Queen's dislike of the Count as very strange, considering how long a time he had served Sophie Dorothea and her father before her. After considerable parley the report shows that the Queen again promises her mother that if she would only keep quiet until the affair of the double marriage was arranged she would do all she could to help her. It is clear from this that the Queen of Prussia's interest was a purely selfish one.

Sophie Dorothea was greatly dissatisfied with Ludemann's report of his interview with the Queen's agent and refused to believe much of it. She was unable to appreciate the necessity of secrecy, she refused the presents, and expressed her confidence and trust in the Count de Bar in the two following spirited memoranda to her daughter:

"AHLDEN, *August 26, 1725.*

"I have received two portraits in miniature set in gold; a gold repeater watch garnished with cornelian, with chain seal and gold hook; an *étui* of mother-of-

pearl, with side garnished in like manner; and a snuff-box covered with a rare agate, which I keep till they can be returned with safety, it being neither just nor proper that I should accept them in the present juncture and circumstances—except the two portraits which I shall retain.

“SOPHIE DOROTHEA.”

“AHLDEN, *September 5, 1725.*

“In case there should be repeated at Hanover what has been said at Rhaburg concerning the Count de Bar, I declare that my firm and constant will is that the Count de Bar shall continue to act for me in my affairs as he has always done hitherto. I ought not, and I will not, prevent those, whom Heaven in its infinite mercy has been pleased to raise up to have compassion on me, from acting in my favour and for my interest. But in future he shall not annoy anybody in Berlin.

“SOPHIE DOROTHEA.”

In the autumn of the same year Sophie Dorothea learned that the Queen of Prussia was coming to Hanover on a visit to her father, George I., who had come over from England to spend a few months in his beloved Electorate. As the Queen would be so near her mother's prison Sophie Dorothea prayed earnestly to see her, and the daughter half promised to come. The moral effect of a visit from the Queen of Prussia to the neglected captive at Ahlden would have been very great, and could not have failed to benefit the prisoner, at least in increased consideration and respect. It would have been a sign to all the world that her daughter was on her side. No wonder the friendless captive desired it so ardently! When she heard that her daughter had arrived at Hanover she dressed herself with more than usual care, and

looked out from her window day after day across the moorland. It was a different face from that which had looked out from the casement thirty years before in the bloom of its youthful beauty. The Princess's hair was white now, and her face lined and drawn, but she still retained traces of great loveliness.

The days went by and the Queen came not, though day by day, and hour by hour, the captive strained her eyes in the direction of Hanover and her ears for sound of the chariot wheels. When the Queen of Prussia arrived at Hanover she was afraid to move in the matter. Her husband forbade her to go to Ahlden, for fear of angering her father, whom he wished to conciliate. So she abandoned the idea, and lost her one chance of seeing her mother.

By-and-by the news came to Ahlden that the Queen of Prussia had gone back to Berlin, and for the first time for long years Sophie Dorothea gave up hope. She had counted so much on this visit, built so many castles in the air upon it, made so many plans, gone over again and again what she would say and how she would greet her daughter, that the disappointment nearly broke her heart. Her daughter had failed her, as all others had failed. It was a convincing proof that, despite all protestations, the Queen of Prussia could not, or would not, make any decisive step on her mother's behalf.

The result of this disappointment was to make Sophie Dorothea cling more closely to the Count de Bar and centre her hopes around him. She caught at him as the drowning man catches at the proverbial straw. One by one her friends had died or proved false, the last of the list of traitors being Ludemann, the bailiff of Ahlden; but she trusted all the more implicitly the Count de Bar, who was the greatest traitor of all. She wrote to him when

she was still smarting under the sense of her daughter's neglect, the following letter, in which she again assures him of her confidence:

"AHLDEN, *September 27, 1725.*

"Words cannot express all I think," she writes, "all I have always thought without the least diminution, all I shall never cease to think. In the name of God, be always the same to me, as I shall be to you till my latest breath."

She speaks of the "dragons and spies" by whom she was surrounded, and, after adverting on the marriage scheme and the treachery of Ludemann, she goes on to say:

"I am of opinion that the whole of this black business [the treachery of Ludemann] has been got up by the clique here for reasons and ends easy to be perceived. This affair has caused me very deep and poignant grief, and shows me the deplorable and dangerous condition wherein I am placed—a condition which is getting worse and worse. I am surrounded by people without pity or justice, and their number is daily increasing. I am incessantly exposed to their calumnies, false suspicions, and ill-turns. They now have it more than ever in their power to invent words and actions which they attribute to me, and so strive to blacken my reputation. Ludemann, who was the only channel through which I could learn anything and make known the truth, is at present absolutely devoted to them.

"If I feared poison many years ago, my present circumstances are such as to strengthen that fear; and as life is not now indifferent to me, this suspicion, added to all the rest, would surely disturb my tranquillity did not the Almighty grace of God preserve peace in my heart in

spite of all storms, and give me increased strength and courage in proportion to the greater need I have of them: I have never had more need of them than now. You may rest assured that, with the aid of that divine grace, nothing on earth will bring about a change in my sentiments or conduct, nor lead me to any action in the slightest degree mean and unworthy. I will resolutely and steadfastly adhere to what I have held fast for so many years, without the smallest change. My honour and what I owe to myself demand it, and every conceivable reason strengthens me in this policy.

"My health is good, and better than might be expected in my agitated state of mind. The God of mercy supports me in a marvellous way; and I take care of myself, since my friends have the goodness to be interested in my welfare. The strong expressions I made use of in my preceding letter on this subject were intended to convey an idea of the great annoyance I am suffering on all sides. Indeed, they excite in me an intense disgust of this place and an ardent desire to leave it."

Sophie Dorothea was utterly alone in the world: her mother was dead, her daughter had failed her, and she was at the mercy of hirelings, who, under pretext of sympathy, were continually robbing and betraying her. Her one idea now was to effect an escape from Ahlden. A year later we find her writing again to the Count de Bar; in her letter she speaks of the "unheard-of injustice and fury of my enemies," and entreats him to come to her. She goes on to say:

"AHLDEN, *August 19, 1726, 3 o'clock in the morning.*

"I must confess that the news that has come from beyond the sea occupies my mind. God grant there may

be no obstacle to delay what I have at heart more than I can express! You are not ignorant, sir, what that is: all my sentiments are known to you. I picture myself becoming a monster losing its sight, but I have hardly thought about it. I doubt whether Heaven, in exchange, will be pleased to open certain eyes. I am entirely ignorant of what is passing in the world except what I learn from the ordinary political news. I am guarded, and more pains than ever are taken to prevent my learning anything."

This was the last cry for help. The Count de Bar hastened not to her succour, but, instead, the Pale Horseman came galloping over the Heath. Deliverance was at hand—the last deliverance, whose name is Death. Yet before that came Sophie Dorothea had to drink the last drop in her cup of bitterness. Convincing proof was brought to her that the man in whom she trusted was added to the long list of traitors. He had never meant to come, he had never wished her to escape; she had henceforth no one to whom she could turn.

This was the last betrayal the unhappy woman had to suffer. Under its strength and fortitude gave way. She wrote one more letter (to be delivered after her death), and gave it under seal to a trusty messenger. Then she broke down utterly, and took to her bed with an attack of something like brain fever. The Governor of the castle sent hurriedly to Hanover, and the news of her serious illness was conveyed to the King in England. Everything that medical skill could do was done without avail: court physicians, apothecaries, and surgeons hurried from Hanover to the lonely castle; but they could do nothing. Confidential Ministers of State came, too; but they were also helpless—they could only listen, shud-

dering, to the awful ravings of the dying woman. The seal she had set on her lips for years was broken at last, and day after day as she fought for life she denounced the tyrant who had been her gaoler and her judge, and cried to Heaven for vengeance upon him. She lost all rallying power, and grew weaker and weaker, until at last, one dull November day, when the chill mists hung heavy over the marshes around Ahlden, Sophie Dorothea breathed her last in the little room where she had been prisoner for so many weary years!

Sophie Dorothea died on November 13, 1726, in the sixty-first year of her age and the thirty-third of her captivity.

CHAPTER XXIX

RETRIBUTION

(1727)

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

SHAKSPEARE, *King Richard III.*

OVER in England the King heard the news of his wife's death with ill-concealed concern, born not of remorse, but fear. In his superstitious soul he remembered the prophecy and trembled. His forebodings of evil were not lessened when Prince Waldeck arrived from Hanover with secret despatches, which gave a detailed account of the awful death-bed at Ahlden and the dying woman's appeal to the retribution of Heaven. Nor did the King derive much comfort from his withered mistresses, for the Duchess of Kendal, to whom he confided all, had a firm faith in omens, visions, and soothsayers, and was even more troubled than he. By way of averting the curse she became more devout than ever, and attended church as many as four times a day, notwithstanding the fact that the Lutheran minister at the German Chapel Royal refused her the communion on the ground that she was living in unrepentant adultery. King George sought to shake off his depression by every means in his power, and the very evening that he learned the tidings his wife was no more he sought distraction by going to see a performance of the Italian comedians at

the Haymarket, accompanied by the Duchess of Kendal and Lady Darlington. The next day he commanded a special performance at the King's theatre, which was followed by others, though up to now the play was a pastime he had very rarely indulged in. But all his efforts were ineffectual, for the shade of his victim haunted him, and her dying cry for vengeance rang in his ears. Sophie Dorothea was more powerful in death than in life.

Outwardly the Court of St. James' ignored the event, and, beyond a line in the *London Gazette* to the effect that the "Duchess of Ahlden" had died at Ahlden on a date specified, the death of the wife of the King of England and the mother of the king to be received no official notice whatever. But the Court of Hanover on receipt of the news from Ahlden had very properly assumed mourning, as on the occasion of the decease of the Duchess of Celle. When King George heard this he waxed exceeding wroth, and sent peremptory orders to the Hanoverian officials to return to their ordinary wear. His anger was increased when he learned that the Court of Berlin had decreed the deepest mourning, as for a Queen of England who was also mother of the Queen of Prussia. It was a natural mark of respect for the daughter to pay, and it showed to all the world that she believed her mother to be an innocent woman. George I. resented the court mourning at Berlin as a personal affront, and protested; but his protest was in vain. Thus did his mean malice pursue his victim even in death.

Meanwhile the body of Sophie Dorothea lay in a plain leaden coffin in the vaults of the Castle of Ahlden, awaiting the King's orders. None dared to pay the remains any honour, nor even give them a decent and Christian burial, for fear of offending the tyrant in England. With the new year (1727) Prince Waldeck came back from

London with the Royal command that the "Duchess of Ahlden" should be buried with as little ceremony as possible in a grave dug in the garden of the castle. But the season was rainy and the Aller overflowed its banks, and though the grave-diggers dug again and again in the swampy ground the waters always rushed into the grave and rendered their labours vain. It was impossible to communicate quickly with the King across the sea, so the coffin was ignominiously carried back again to the cellar, covered over with a heap of sand, and left until further orders. It would have been left there until now, for all the King cared, had he not been a prey to superstitious fears. He could not sleep, he could not rest, and life was becoming a burden to him. This may have been due to advancing years and an impaired digestion, for he was a coarse and heavy eater; but the Duchess of Kendal declared that she was warned in a dream that it was all the work of the unquiet spirit of Sophie Dorothea, and her ghost would never rest, nor let the King rest, until her body was laid by the side of her ancestors at Celle.

One May morning, therefore, a King's messenger arrived at Ahlden from England with orders, under the Royal sign manual, that the remains of the "Duchess of Ahlden" should be interred in the ducal burial-vaults in the old church of Celle as quietly and expeditiously as possible. That same night the body was taken from the cellar, hoisted on to a vehicle, and conveyed across the moorland to Celle, where it arrived while the little town was still sleeping. Three or four workmen from the castle were waiting in the church and everything was in readiness. Without any ceremony or religious service the coffin was hurried down to the vaults under the chancel, where it lies until this day.

The church above is full of effigies of Sophie Dorothea's ancestors, whose deeds and renown are blazoned forth in brass and marble and painted glass; but there is neither memorial nor inscription to mark the last resting-place of the heiress of Celle, who, by virtue of her sufferings, was the most famous of them all. In the dark vault below, her remains could not be identified at all were it not for a small shield on the top right-hand corner of the coffin, containing her name and the dates of birth and death. Hard by the church in the "French Garden" of the castle there stands a statue of the Danish Queen, Caroline Matilda, whose sad lot closely resembled that of Sophie Dorothea, and whose body was deposited in the same vault half a century later. But of the heiress of Celle, direct ancestress of two of the mightiest sovereigns in the modern world, there exists no monument whatever. Now that the flight of years has obliterated the bitterness which clung around her name it is surely time that some memorial were raised to her memory. And where more fitting than in the place of her birth, under the grey walls of the old castle she loved so well? She was the last Princess of Celle, and in the hearts of the people the tradition of her beauty and her woes still lingers.

The vision which appeared to the Duchess of Kendal must have been a lying spirit, for though Sophie Dorothea slept with her forefathers, no relief came to her oppressor. King George was overwrought, nervous, and dispirited. His government was honey-combed with intrigues, his quarrel with his son was intensified in bitterness; and not all his avaricious mistresses with their ruddled cheeks could give him comfort. He was consumed with a desire to return to Hanover. Peradven-

ture, like certain criminals, he felt impelled to revisit the scene of his crime.

On June 3, 1727, a month after the tardy burial of his victim, the King set out from England for Hanover. Travelling night and day, he reached Dalden on the far frontier of Holland at midnight on June 9th. Here he stopped to change horses, and he devoured a huge supper. Instead of tarrying for the night, as his suite expected and his travelling physician advised, for he had eaten heavily and was worn out with the long journey, the King was seized with an overpowering restlessness to reach Hanover, and started off again at three o'clock in the morning.

As the Royal coach rumbled out of the courtyard a man stepped forth from the shadow and threw a document through the window on to the King's knees. Neither His Majesty nor his escort thought anything of the incident, supposing the paper to be one of those many petitions with which George was wont to be pestered on his return to the Electorate. By the grey light of the dawn the King broke the seal and read, and as he read his hands shook and his face grew ashen. It was a letter from his dead wife, written when she felt the hand of death upon her. The trusty messenger, to whom she had given the packet, had waited and waited until the King should come from England that he might surely deliver it into his hands. It was an awful letter for a woman to write, doubly awful for the man to receive. It was penned evidently when Sophie Dorothea's brain was on fire with her wrongs—when her reason was trembling in the balance; in it she reiterated her sufferings and his cruelty, cursed him with her dying breath, and summoned him to meet her within a year and a day before the judgment throne of God,

there to answer for the wrong he had done her. To the trembling tyrant it came like a voice from the dead. He recalled again the prophecy that he would not long outlive his wife, and now came the confirmation of his fears. He heard his victim, like an accusing angel, calling him to his doom—a year and a day—a year and a day—and that was last November. The letter fell from his nerveless hands, there was a rush of blood to his eyes, a beating in his brain, and he fell forward in a fit.

In great alarm the equerry called a halt, and the long procession of coaches and escort, pulled up by the wayside. But the King recovered almost immediately, and, insisting that it was nothing, angrily commanded them to proceed. Linden, the next stopping-place, was reached in a few hours, and here dinner awaited the Royal traveller. But the King could not eat. His indisposition was evidently worse than he would admit. The surgeons bled him and dosed him and advised a rest; but their patient would hear no reason, his one desire was to push forward to his beloved Hanover.

Quitting Linden at sunset, the Royal *cortège* thundered forward with all speed. An hour later the King became much worse, but he hastened on as though pursued by a legion of furies. His escort would fain have halted; but still the King urged them on, leaning forward from the window and shouting "To Osnabrück! to Osnabrück!" as the horses galloped through the gathering dusk. Osnabrück was reached at ten o'clock; but by that time the King had again collapsed, falling forward into the arms of his gentleman-in-waiting. They bore him into the Episcopal Palace, now occupied by his youngest brother, Ernest Augustus, bled him again, chafed his clenched hands, applied restoratives; but all in vain. George never recovered consciousness, and died

at midnight in the very room where he was born sixty-seven years before. He had obeyed the dread summons, and had gone to meet his wife before the judgment throne of God.

Thus died George I., the first of our Hanoverian kings, unloved and unmourned—nay, not quite unmourned, for even this man had one who loved him. His aged mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, had not been able to pack up in time to travel with her liege, but was following him with all speed. When the news of his death was brought her on the road she gave way to the loudest demonstrations of grief, beating her breast, tearing her hair, and filling the air with lamentations. She had lived with him nigh on forty years, and though he had not been true to her—for it was not his nature to be true to any one—in his way he had been fond of her; she had become as indispensable to him as he had to her.

The Duchess journeyed to Brunswick and remained there for some months, abandoning herself to the violence of her sorrow. Then prudence got the better of her sense of bereavement, and she returned to England to look after her moneys. She took up her abode at Isleworth, and lived there in pious retirement and affluence. She was devoted to the King's memory. He had promised, she said, to come back to her after death, and one day when a raven fluttered in at her window she took it into her silly old head that George had come to her in this guise. She took charge of the bird, treated it with all honour, petted and caressed it to the day of her death, and provided for it in her will. Let us hope it gave her some comfort. Poor old Ermengarda Melusina! She had her faults, but she was always on the side of mercy, even in the case of the sad captive of Ahlden, whom she had supplanted, to be in turn supplanted by

others. Yet, despite them all, she loved her George, and his affection for her, grotesque though it was, formed the only redeeming grace in his character.

The new King, George II., did nothing so far as we know to clear his mother's memory, though Horace Walpole writes: "The second George loved his mother as much as he hated his father, and purposed, it was said, if she had survived, to have brought her over and declared her Queen-Dowager. Lady Suffolk told me her surprise, on going to the new Queen the morning after George I.'s death, at seeing hung up in the Queen's dressing-room the whole length of a lady in royal robes, and in the bedchamber a half-length of the same person, which Lady Suffolk had never seen before."¹ They were pictures of his mother, which the Prince had till then kept concealed. This hardly tallies with Lord Hervey's testimony of George's II. reticence concerning his mother, "whom," he writes, "on no occasion I ever heard him mention, not even inadvertently or indirectly, any more than if such a person had ever had a being."² The Jacobites used to call George II. "the little Königs-marck" (an unfounded libel if ever there was one!) and this may have accounted for his silence. Another poetaster twitted "dapper George" with being governed by his Queen, and advised him

. . . if you would have us fall down and adore you,
Lock up your fat spouse, as your dad did before you,

which shows that Sophie Dorothea's imprisonment at Ahlden was fairly familiar to the English public.

That the true story of his mother's life became known to George II. is certain, for on his first visit to Hanover

¹ Walpole's *Reminiscences*.

² Lord Hervey's *Memoirs*.

after ascending the throne of England he ordered the secret records of the divorce proceedings to be brought to him, and, after he had read them through carefully, he burned them with his own hands. The same fate probably befell the incriminating letters. Extraordinary care was taken at Hanover to suppress or destroy any and every compromising document or paper which contained mention of Sophie Dorothea or Königsmarck. Despite these precautions, the most damning evidence of all came to light. Some workmen employed in renovating the wing formerly occupied by Sophie Dorothea in the Palace of Hanover, came across the skeleton of a man, almost unrecognisable from quicklime, but, from a ring and fragments of clothing, was identified as that of the missing Count Königsmarck. Orders were given that the place should be bricked up again, and the remains were thrust out of sight once for all—probably pulverised and cast into the river Leine.

These things go to prove that the son lacked the courage to do justice to his mother's memory, or he believed her guilty. In death, as in life, Sophie Dorothea continued to be the Iron Mask of the House of Hanover.

But we can afford to be more merciful in our judgment. Whatever were the faults of her youth, she atoned for them fourfold. Her dauntless spirit, her fortitude, her dignified resignation through long years of captivity, invest her memory with a halo of suffering. Her love and her sorrows plead for her—her sorrows most of all, for it may be doubted if all history, all romance, can offer a parallel to the long-drawn agony of the life of this uncrowned queen.

APPENDIX

LIST OF AUTHORITIES QUOTED AND BOOKS TO WHICH REFERENCE HAS BEEN MADE.

UNPUBLISHED MSS.

The Correspondence of Princess Sophie Dorothea and Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck, 1691—1693 (in French). Preserved in the University Library of Lund, Sweden.

The Despatches and Correspondence of Sir William Dutton Colt, Envoy-Extraordinary to the Princes of Brunswick and Lüneburg, 1689—1693. In the State Paper Office, London.

The Despatches and Correspondence of Mr. Cresset (who succeeded Sir W. D. Colt at Hanover) and his secretaries, 1693—1702. In the State Paper Office, London.

The Despatches of Mr. Poley (who succeeded Mr. Cresset at Hanover), 1705. In the State paper Office, London.

Sundry Letters of Mr. Stepney, sometime British Envoy to the Court of Dresden, 1694—1695. In the State Paper Office, London.

Sundry Letters and Papers (in French and German), specified elsewhere. Preserved in the Royal Archives and Library, Hanover, and at Brunswick and Dresden.

PUBLISHED WORKS.

Die Herzogin von Ahlden, Stammutter der Königlichen Häuser Hannover und Preussen. Leipzig, 1852. Now out of print. Written anonymously by Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode.

Die Prinzessin von Ahlden. By Dr. Adolph Köcher. Two articles in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1882, vol. xlviii.

Römischen Octavia, 1707, vol. vi. By Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel.

The Magazine of the Historical Association of Lower Saxony, 1879.

Sophie Dorothea, Prinzessin von Ahlden und Kurfürstin Sophie von Hannover. By A. F. H. Schaumann. Hannover, 1879.

Briefe der Herzogin von Orleans, Elizabeth Charlotte, an die Kurfürstin Sophie von Hanover.

Briefe der Prinzessin Elisabeth Charlotte von Orleans, 1676—1722.

Memoiren der Herzogin Sophie, nachmals Kurfürstin von Hannover. Dr. Adolph Köcher. Leipzig, 1879.

Memoires du règne de George I. "Anon." The Hague, 1729.

Letters with varied contents. Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1772.

Geschichte der Herzogin von Ahlden. Copenhagen, 1786.

Short Narrative of my Fate and Imprisonment. Hamburg, 1840. Edited by "W. L. Mollor." (Major Müller).

This purports to be an autobiography written by the Princess Sophie Dorothea, but it is spurious. Yet the deeds and letters quoted show that the author had access to some genuine documents, and point to the writer being Major Müller, librarian to the late Duke of Cambridge.

Memoirs of Sophie Dorothea. Two vols. London, 1845. Out of print. Translated into the German also. Written anonymously. [By Major Müller, sometime librarian to the late Duke of Cambridge].

This covers much the same ground as the *Short Narrative*, and also contains some authentic documents and papers. Like the *Short Narrative* it is evidently based on Duke Antony Ulrich's *Octavia*. But the "Diary of Conversations," in vol. ii., purporting to be written by Sophie Dorothea, is undoubtedly spurious.

Aurora Königsmarck. By Professor W. F. Palmblad. Six vols. Translated from the Swedish into the German. Leipzig, 1853. Out of print.

An Article on *Fresh Contributions to the History of the Hanoverian Princess Sophie Dorothea.* By Edward Bode-mann.

Histoire Secrette de la Duchesse D'Hanover, Épouse de Georges Premier. London, 1732. Ascribed to Baron von Poellnitz (some say erroneously).

Lives of the Queens of the House of Hanover. By Dr. Doran.

The Four Georges. By W. M. Thackeray.

Memoirs of the Court of England. By J. H. Jesse.

Lives of the Queens of England. (Mary II. and Anne.) By Agnes Strickland.

The Electress Sophia. Article in *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 161.

Carlyle's *Frederick II.*

Macaulay's *History of England.*

Horace Walpole's *Reminiscences.*

Lord Hervey's *Memoirs.*

Eléonore d'Olbreuse. By the Baroness von Amstel. Article in *Nineteenth Century*, 1898.

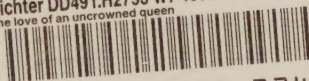
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